

## **Report on the 2010 Maryland Federation Mini-Convention**

### **Chapter Sets Records for Attendance, Participation**

A record-setting 18 members and officers from Chapter 1747 registered for the recent MD - Federation Mini-Convention, held at the Comfort Inn in Bowie. Some had signed up for both days and others for only one; but more than half had signed on to work at the event, either as sergeants-at-arms, to staff information and other tables, to register attendees, and to play other roles.

For the chapter, it was not only a “first,” but it was proof-positive that when the MD-Federation’s 2011 convention takes place in Bowie next May 2-4, we will be well prepared for our role as “host chapter.”

While some of us were in on the planning of the mini-convention from the start, others jumped in at the last minute, proving that our chapter members are equipped to do whatever is necessary - even at short notice. And to do it well, too. And for this they deserve the thanks of all chapter members, for they represented you very well.

From the opening ceremonies, when Al Golato led us all in the Pledge of Allegiance to the closing moments when President Dorothy Campbell was called on for comments, our chapter played a big role. (See list of Chapter participants below.) In between, Chapter 1747 members/officers were visible everywhere.

### **Highlight: MD Senator Ben Cardin**

Keynote speaker at Monday’s luncheon was U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, longtime friend and champion of federal workers, retirees and seniors. He addressed the recent health care legislation, calling it a victory that was long overdue. His words brought forth much applause, particularly when he said that for years federal workers and retirees have been subsidizing those without health insurance, and that within a few years we should see the cost of our health care premiums decrease.

### **On the Agenda: Both Unity and Controversy**

The convention was spirited and lively; while there was much unity, there also was controversy over several of the 15 resolutions being considered for forwarding to the August 29-Sept. 3 National Convention in Grand Rapids, MI. The biggest issues -- based on only recently exposed information that NARFE’s financial health is critical -- dealt with ways to recruit new members and retain current ones. These resolutions proposed to raise dues, establish new dues categories, and have NARFE cut expenses at the national level.

### **Family Memberships: Unjust or Just?**

The hottest issue was a call for establishing a “family membership,” in which a married couple would be eligible for **discounted** dues but each spouse would enjoy the same rights, privileges and benefits that individual members enjoy only from paying **full** dues. In other words, individual members paying full dues would be subsidizing “family membership” members paying discounted dues.

At a special meeting just prior to the mini-convention, the chapter’s executive board had voted to oppose all “family membership” resolutions, agreeing that while such memberships *might* increase membership, they could also backfire, since couples who now each pay individual dues could resign and rejoin at a discounted “family membership” rate- a potential monetary loss for NARFE, not a gain! We also agreed that it was patently unfair and even discriminatory that both spouses in those couples paying discounted dues based solely on marital status would each get all the rights and privileges of belonging while everyone who is not eligible for family membership would have to pay the full dues rate.

Furthermore, we felt that “family memberships” and some of the other proposed measures would not solve NARFE’s financial problems and would create even more complicated ones. After much heated discussion, in which we voiced our position most strongly, the discounted “family membership” resolution passed overwhelmingly.

Subsequently, the chapter will, at the upcoming national convention in Grand Rapids, again go on record opposing that resolution or any other that establishes a dues category based on marital status and puts individual members in a position where they must subsidize those eligible for “family memberships.”

### **Other Convention Highlights**

Since recruitment and retention are NARFE’s number one concern, and retention is predominantly the responsibility of chapters, all of us participated in a Chapter Development Workshop, designed to help ailing chapters (not 1747). In fact, in a surprise move, President Campbell was called on to attest to our chapter’s many and various activities that have brought us recognition in the communities covered by our charter.

On the light side, there were many door prizes awarded over the two days and many happy winners. Over \$800 was collected for MD- PAC, the Federation’s political action fund, as well as a sizeable amount for Alzheimer’s/Lupus research. Several candidates for NARFE national office spoke, including former MD- Fed. President Dick Strombotne who’s running for national president and Ron Bowers, also a former MD- Fed. president who’s running for Region II Vice President. Unable to be with us is a third Marylander, currently Region II VP Charlie Saylor, who is running for national treasurer. Several other candidates spoke as well.

This report was written for three purposes: to keep you posted on NARFE internal issues, to let you know what you missed by not attending the mini-convention, and to encourage

you to attend the May 2-4, 2011 convention. Here's hoping you'll be sorry you missed this one and you'll plan to attend the next one. And, in between, please come to our regular membership meetings, starting with the next one, on September 16. Thank you.

Those who attended/worked at the mini-convention were: Tina Bell; Dorothy Bice; Ed Bice; Jack Calloway; Dorothy Campbell; Louise Cole; Shirley DeJavanne; Howard Dobson; Al Golato; Evelyn Harris; Jerry Kursban; JJim Merna; Donna Minner; Claire Morgen; Luz Naval; Judi Schmidt; and Lillie Watson.