



# NARFE NEWSLETTER

GREATER BOWIE-CROFTON AREA CHAPTER 1747

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

Volume 34 No. 6

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February 2014

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**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS** are held at the Bowie Senior Center, 14900 Health Center Drive, Bowie, 20716 in Room 4. Meeting dates are the third Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM except in July and August. There is never a charge to attend and all meetings are open to the public. Please check your current newsletter or our website for any changes.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS** are held the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 125, Bowie Senior Center. All chapter members are welcome.

**NOTE:** Chapter meetings are cancelled when Prince George's County schools are closed due to inclement weather. Otherwise, meetings are held as scheduled.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

❖ **General Meeting:** Thursday, February 20, 10:00 A.M.  
The Savvy Senior Traveler: How to Save Money and Travel Safely

❖ **General Meeting:** Thursday, March 20. Spring Gardening Success; Gene Sumi; Homestead Gardens.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JERRY KURSBAN

### Just Do it —Take Action to Protect Your Cola

Obviously we aren't referring to cola beverages which are meeting increasing competition from other beverages, as consumers SUBSTITUTE bottled water or energy drinks. But if you have been reading your monthly NARFE magazine, you are aware of another SUBSTITUTION EFFECT that may negatively affect the amount of your pension benefits — CHAINED CPI. Joe Young, our Federal Legislation Committee Chair, addressed this issue at length in our December Chapter 1747 NARFE Newsletter. It is a well-established fact that most changes that occur in Congress originate at the grassroots level and move upward. Do you not remember that it wasn't so long ago when there was substantial support to privatize Social Security benefits? The movement was stopped only when seniors' organizations — including NARFE — organized and vociferously took action and stepped forward to bring the movement toward privatization to a halt. Have you not already sent a note or an e-mail to express YOUR position on our more recent issues? What stopped you? Why not take a few minutes before this day is over? IF NOT NOW, WHEN? *JUST DO IT.*

**JUST DO IT — TAKE ACTION: SUPPORT NARFE'S STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM.**

Ed Bice, our former Chapter 1747 President, is currently the State Legislative Committee (SLC) Chairman for the entire Maryland Federation of Chapters, in addition to our own Chapter. Let me assure you that he has been extremely busy meeting with State Senators and Delegates to forward our NARFE positions. Are you motivated by the potential to receive an ANNUAL tax credit for the purchase and retention of long-term care

Continued on page 2

### On the Web or on Paper: How Do You Prefer Your Newsletter?

As chapter expenses are outstripping our chapter monthly income (from dues), we have identified two areas where we believe cost-saving measures can be taken to streamline our newsletter distribution system, which is by far our largest monthly expense. If successful, this would also allow us to keep chapter dues fixed. These two measures are explained below:

First, we are canvassing our membership to see what interest there is in receiving the monthly newsletter by email rather than by regular mail. Each month, those members agreeable to receiving their newsletters this way will be notified that the current issue is now available to be accessed through their email or on our web site. We will continue to mail a hard copy to those who opt not to receive their newsletter via email.

We offered this service five years ago when nineteen members were interested. If you expressed an interest then, please let us know if you are still interested and we will make sure that this time your future newsletters will be available by email. To participate in this program, please email our webmaster, Howard "Flash" Gordon at [flash@acm.org](mailto:flash@acm.org), providing your name, email address and zip code. Thank you for considering this request.

Also, if couples are receiving two newsletters but only one is required, please inform Flash at [flash@acm.org](mailto:flash@acm.org) of this as well.

Thank you for trying to reduce chapter costs.

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insurance and also to reduce your property tax burden? Fellow NARFE members, this is an election year. This is when expressing your opinion really counts. So why not get behind Ed and show him how much you appreciate the extensive efforts he is making on our behalf? If you didn't attend the United Seniors of Maryland Annual Legislative Forum on January 21, you still have time to express your opinion to your legislator. IF NOT NOW, WHEN? *JUST DO IT.*

*JUST DO IT* — LEND YOUR SUPPORT TO CHAPTER 1747

Our chapter membership and the amount of our funds has been slowly but steadily declining. At our general meeting on January 16, 2014, we alerted the attendees that the time has arrived to take actions which will either increase our revenues or cut our costs. Our Executive Chapter Board members will be actively discussing alternatives, and will bring our suggestions to the entire Chapter 1747 membership for consideration in the near future. When the time comes for you to step forward and assist in implementing actions, please *JUST DO IT.*

## FEDERAL LEGISLATION

JOSEPH YOUNG

### Can This Be True?

After witnessing record low production from the 113th Congress, relatively little was expected of the 114th Congress. Surprisingly, Congress is poised to pass a \$1.1 trillion bipartisan appropriations bill by January 17th without the threat of shutting down the government or any other form of political or economic drama. This is so unlike the partisanship of the previous Congress.

On Monday, January 13th, congressional negotiators unveiled the \$1.1 trillion spending plan, which would fully restore cuts to Head Start, including new money for early childhood education and grants that would expand preschool programs, partially restore cuts to medical research and job-training programs, and finance new programs to help prevent sexual assault in the military and provide a one-percent raise for federal workers.

The District suffered a blow when no new money was provided to construct three new buildings for the Department of Homeland Security's proposed campus in Anacostia.

The spending bill had pluses and minuses for both political parties. Congressional Republicans were very pleased to have \$20 billion in funding restored for the Pentagon and the redistribution of money from a public health fund established by the Affordable Care Act and the bill bans the Obama Administration from using that money to pay to implement the new law. The spending bill would also cut \$10 million for the Independent Payment Advisory Board, established to advise government officials on health-care issues.

Other Republican victories included energy policy, gun-control, and the attack on the U. S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya.

The bill would bar funding to enforce new standards that would ban the use of incandescent light bulbs. It would place restrictions on the Justice and Homeland Security Departments that prevent them from establishing programs similar to the controversial operation known as "Fast and Furious," a gun-running program.

The measure would also ban foreign aid for Libya until the State Department can confirm Libya's cooperation with ongoing investigations into the September 11, 2012 attack at the U. S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi.

Democrats won significant increases in funding for early childhood education and Head Start. Democrats were also successful in stopping GOP attempts to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gas emissions and repealing new clean water regulations. Democrats were also successful in blocking Republican efforts to prohibit the Justice Department from using federal money to challenge state immigration laws in court.

Democrats were also able get the Republicans to agree to partially repeal the sequester, restoring \$20 billion to the Pentagon budget and funding to domestic federal agencies which had already absorbed sequester reductions.

This appropriations bill, despite the increases will leave domestic agency budgets billions of dollars short of the request made by President Obama and Congressional Democrats.

It was not the best spending bill that could have been drafted, nor was it the worst. Let's just hope the spirit of cooperation and bipartisanship continues for the full term of the 114th Congress.

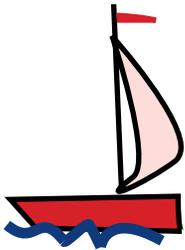
## STATE LEGISLATION

ED BICE

The 2014 General Assembly opened on January 8 with the first day of business to include the election of Michael Busch (District 30) to start his ninth year as House Speaker. Senate President Mike Miller (District 27) was re-elected for the 28th time and remains the longest serving senate officer in the United States.

The anticipated revenue surplus has not materialized as revenues fell some 150 million dollars short of the target to start the session. The minimum wage issue is on the front burner as Montgomery and Prince George's counties have jointly already passed a wage figure that is a concern to other counties. This being an election year will likely produce the usual political slant on legislation by candidates who are running for state offices while exercising their responsibilities in the General Assembly.

**Be a Political Animal!**  
**Communicate with Your Federal**  
**and State Representatives.**



## LET'S GO SAILING!

Guess what? At last Thursday's meeting, Pete Hill, our friendly Sergeant-At-Arms, gave a presentation on ANSA, the Annapolis Naval Sailing Association.

Pete is one of their professional sailor/skipper, and is suggesting that groups of NARFE guests can take out their boat, a large CSY (that's Caribbean Sailing Yacht) 44 foot-sail-boat for very little cost. For example, a group of ten people, on a weekday, could go out for the entire day's sail around the Chesapeake Bay for \$100.00 total cost — \$10.00 apiece (!)

Next sailing season will start around mid-March 2014.

If you are interested, and/or have ANY questions, please contact Pete at 301-249-9143. And and prepare to have fun on the **Bay!**

## NARFE Notes

*The following stories are taken from NARFE News notes, published on the web on January 21, 2014.*

The federal government shed 2,000 jobs in December, ending 2013 with a net loss of 79,000 positions, according to the latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Federal agencies, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, lost 4,200 jobs in December, while USPS actually gained 2,200 employees in the month.

The U.S. economy overall added just 74,000 jobs, a disappointing figure that fell far below expectations. The unemployment rate actually dipped, however, to 6.7 percent, primarily due to people dropping out of the labor force.

Federal government job loss has slowed somewhat in recent months. In October, agencies shed 12,000 positions and lost 94,000 jobs in the previous 12 months. This corresponds to a reduction in the number of employees retiring from federal service, which trended downward in November and December.

Agencies are still awaiting their appropriations for the remainder of fiscal 2014, but with the sequester partially repealed for two years thanks to the recent budget agreement, federal offices may begin rolling back the hiring freezes that have heavily contributed to the net job losses across government.

The total federal workforce — including military personnel and USPS employees — is around 4.3 million. That number is likely to shrink as the military plans to withdraw remaining troops in Afghanistan this year and the Postal Service to reduce staffing.

Many congressional Republicans, including House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, want to downsize the federal workforce through attrition, which means hiring fewer employees to replace those who leave government. Ryan's initial plan, for example, proposed cutting the workforce by 10 percent through attrition by 2015. Ryan co-authored the 2014-2015 budget blueprint, which did not include any mandates for federal workforce reductions.

There is a new phone scam making its rounds, targeting cell phone users. The Better Business Bureau is putting out an alert warning of a new scam that can result in unauthorized charges to your wireless bill. This simple scam that can cost mobile phone users big bucks. Consumers are receiving calls from unknown numbers. The person making the call will either hang up or leave a message saying there is something wrong with a loved one, prompting a return call. But the person calling back may not realize the number they are dialing is an international call and one that could be linked to an overseas adult entertainment line. The consumer ends up racking up premium service rates, typically appearing as a \$19.95 charge. This practice of third parties placing unauthorized charges on wireless accounts is called "cramming," and it's becoming a growing problem.

The BBB said no one is off limits to the scammer and the con artists are hoping to reach those unaware in order to rack up hundreds to thousands in charges.

"The area codes to look out for originate from the Dominican Republic (809), Jamaica (876), British Virgin Islands (284) and Grenada (473).

"Monitor very closely your phone bill to be sure everything on there is true, and it's factual and you ought to be paying" Gallagher said. "If you don't believe it is, squawk about it to let your phone company know 'wait a minute this is not some call that I made. I didn't do this.' Cut your damage right there."

In addition to checking your cell phone bill regularly and carefully, Gallagher recommends that you avoid answering unknown calls; do not return calls, look for unexplained charges often \$20 or less, and question on charges with your carrier.

## Upcoming Maryland Events

February 4, 8:30-3:30: Md Federation Board Meeting, Bowie  
March 31—April 1: Region II Training Symposium, Gettysburg PA Hotel and Conference Center

## CHAPTER 1747 BUDGET REPORT

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Balance on: December 1, 2013  | \$1822.03 |
| Receipts:                     | 1836.94   |
| Disbursements:                | 1840.50   |
| Balance on: December 30, 2013 | \$1818.47 |

### Greater Bowie-Crofton Area NARFE News

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Dues payments, gifts, and contributions to NARFE are not deductible as Charitable Contributions for income tax purposes.

## CHAPTER BOARD

### Officers

|                     |                   |              |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| President           | Jerry Kursban     | 301-261-3329 | jkursban@gmail.com      |
| 1st Vice President  | Vacant            |              |                         |
| 2nd Vice President  | Lillie Watson     | 301-383-1597 | lwatson16@hotmail.com   |
| Secretary           | Chiquitta Thomas  | 301-805-4108 | c_thomas106@verizon.net |
| Assistant Secretary | Jacqueline Wilson |              | miss.JackieV@aol.com    |
| Treasurer           | Bob Cullen        | 301-262-4783 | ba3537@aol.com          |
| Assistant Treasurer | Louise Cole       | 410-672-6528 | col9135@aol.com         |

### Committee Chairs

|                       |                |              |                          |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Federal Legislation   | Joseph Young   | 301-218-5187 | JosephYoung48@yahoo.com  |
| Membership            | Lillie Watson  | 301-383-1597 | lwatson16@hotmail.com    |
| Newsletter Production | Jessica Forman | 843-347-9287 | jessicafforman@gmail.com |
| Programs              | Vacant         |              |                          |
| Service Officers      | Bob Cullen     | 301-262-4783 | ba3537@aol.com           |
|                       | Paul Schuette  | 301-262-0975 | paulschuette@verizon.net |
| Sergeant-at-Arms      | Peter Hill     | 301-249-9143 | pmkthill1@msn.com        |
| State Legislation     | Ed Bice        | 301-464-3748 | DE3637@verizon.net       |
| Ways & Means          | Dorothy Bice   | 301-464-3748 | DE3637@verizon.net       |

### Activity Coordinators

|                          |                        |              |                       |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Alzheimer's Fund         | Vacant                 |              |                       |
| Community Events         | Ed Bice (Bowie)        | 301-464-3748 | DE3637@verizon.net    |
|                          | Louise Cole (Odenton)  | 410-672-6528 | col9135@aol.com       |
|                          | Donna Minner (Crofton) | 410-721-9799 |                       |
| Meeting Sign-In/Greeter  | F. Miner and D. Evans  |              |                       |
| NARFE-Net Coordinator    | Howard (Flash) Gordon  | 301-464-2745 | flash@acm.org         |
| NARFE-PAC                | Ed Bice                | 301-464-3748 | DE3637@verizon.net    |
| Photographer             | Frank Lee              | 410-672-5065 | fllee0716@verizon.net |
| Refreshments             | Jack Calloway          | 301-262-3457 |                       |
|                          | Dave Galliard          | 301-262-7261 |                       |
|                          | Tom Page               | 301-262-3418 |                       |
| Social Media Coordinator | Howard (Flash)Gordon   | 301-464-2745 | flash@acm.org         |
| Sunshine                 | Marjorie Laios         | 301-262-1566 |                       |

## The Savvy Senior Traveler

### How to Save and Travel Safely

February 20, 2014