



NARFE NEWSLETTER

GREATER BOWIE-CROFTON AREA CHAPTER 1747

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

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narfe.org/chapter1747

January 2019

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.

POSTAL ADDRESS: NARFE Chapter 1747, P.O. Box 504, Bowie, MD 20718

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

- January 1: **New Year's Day**
- January 3: Executive Board Meeting, Bowie Senior Center, 10:00a-noon
- January 17: General Meeting, Bowie Senior Center, Diane Polangin, Total Tax Service, will discuss the impact of the Tax Reform Act on our 2018 Tax Returns
- January 20: **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

HAPPY NEW YEAR
Come join us!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Frank Lee

As we near the new year, we are facing a period of hope and uncertainty. With the Democrats assuming control of the House of Representatives, Representative Gerald E. Connolly (D-Va) who will be the new chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee on government operations said that "First of all, I think the hostility to federal employees and their ...unions will end". "We believe strongly that federal employees need to be respected and their rights in the workplace upheld and strengthened. So, we'll take a very different approach than that which has characterized the Republican leadership... I think that you'll see a reversal on a lot of fronts including GOP hits on federal workplace rights and compensation. I think that will have practical consequences that are good for federal employees. I think that's a big change". Congressman Connolly has introduced the Equal COLA Act – legislation that would provide FERS retirees a full COLA each year based on the actual measured change in consumer prices. At present, the FERS COLA is limited to 2 percent when consumer prices increase between 2 and 3 percent. The legislation would create parity between the FERS and CSRS COLAs.

The administration task force on reforming the U.S. Postal Service has released its recommendations. Notably, the privatization of the postal service was not

recommended. The task force however did recommend eliminating collective bargaining over compensation for USPS employees. The task force also recommended freezing postal workers' wages and increase their out-of-pocket contributions toward retirement, which would effectively lower their take-home pay.

NARFE President Ken Thomas said "Some proposals issued by the Task Force on the U.S. Postal System are prudent steps toward improving the agency's finances, but gutting compensation and allowing service and delivery standards to lapse would only be counterproductive to maintaining the universal postal services the American public depends on to stay connected. NARFE believes that maintaining affordability and strong service standards in the form of six-day and to-the-door delivery is essential for sustaining USPS viability into the future."

A bipartisan pair of congressmen – Reps. Kevin Brady, R-TX and Richard Neal, D-MA introduced H.R. 6933, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act of 2018, to modify the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of federal retirees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) who earned Social Security benefits through other employment, such as private sector jobs. Under the bill, starting in 2020, individuals whose Social Security benefits are reduced by the WEP would receive an additional monthly payment of \$100 per month. Individuals receiving a WEP-reduced Social Security benefit based on their spouse's employment would receive an additional \$50 per month. These changes would apply to individuals who turn age 62 prior to 2025.

President Trump signed a short-term spending bill that extends government funding for the Homeland Security Department, the Justice Department, the Agriculture Department and other government agencies through December 21. Trump and congressional Democrats are at an impasse over funding for building a wall along the U.S. Mexican border. If Congress and Trump do not act before midnight Dec. 21, a partial government shutdown will begin, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands of federal workers. The proposed pay raise for Federal civilian workers is in the appropriation. If Congress fails to pass the appropriation bill before January, the president's proposed pay freeze on civilian Federal workers will take effect. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer met with the President on Dec. 11 but made no progress in resolving the issue.

New Chapter Website

The Executive Board has designed a new website for the chapter. We hope to implement the new website at the beginning of next year. Please review the new website at www.narfe.org/chapter1747 and provide us feedback on the new website. The new website will be easier to use and maintain.

Federation Presentation to Chapter 1747

At our general meeting on April 18, 2019, our Federation President, Dr. Gary Roundtree Sr, and the 1st VP and Legislative Director Dr. Sudha Haley will make a presentation to us on Federation initiatives and activities.

January Program

Diane Polangin from Total Tax Service will discuss the impact of the recent Tax Reform Act on our 2018 Tax Return. Please join us for this important presentation.

Enhanced February Meeting

We are planning to add some food and fun to our February meeting to battle the dreariness of winter. This meeting will be held at the Osaka Grill and Buffet restaurant in Crofton. Their address is 1633A Crofton Centre, Crofton, MD 21114. It is located in a shopping mall at the intersection of Route 3 and Davidson Road (MD 424). After the presentation on alternatives to long term care, we will be treated to a sumptuous buffet at the restaurant. The restaurant has 6 serving stations plus a sushi bar and hibachi grill. You won't go hungry here. Please join us at the Osaka Grill in February for a presentation on an important topic and a sumptuous meal. We will move the start time for our February meeting to 11:00a. At the meeting, we will conduct NARFE business and have our presentation first to be followed by a buffet lunch. Members will be charged for their lunch when they arrive at the restaurant. With the senior discount, members will be charged \$11 or less for their lunch depending on whether they order a drink with their lunch. The charge includes a 10% tip. If this experiment is successful, we will hold more meetings at restaurants in the future.

Membership Transactions

Membership transactions for Nov 1-30 included:

Members dropped:	3
Members transferred in:	0
Members transferred out:	0
Members passed away	3
Members reinstated	1
New Members:	0
Total Members (Nov 3)	619

Members who have passed on are:

Gerald F. Cotton, Sherman Krasney, & Terry Schuette

May they all rest in peace!

Sherman Krasney

Sherman Krasney a former president and long-time member of Chapter 1747 died on November 26, 2018. Sherman was the chapter president from 1994 to 1995 and from 1997 to 1998. May he rest in peace.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION
Jerry Kursban

A NEW YEAR BRINGS A NEW CONGRESS AND NEW LEGISLATION

The Constitution requires that a new Congress convenes on January 3 of each odd-numbered year. On the first day, the Senate selects a president pro tempore and the House selects a speaker. Both positions are elected from the majority party. Legislation from the previous Congress expires and new legislation needs to be introduced. "For the 116th Congress, NARFE will remain particularly vigilant against an extension of the Holman Rule, which allows for

floor amendments to appropriations legislation that eliminate a federal position, reduce the number of employees at an agency or cut the salary of an individual federal employee or group of employees." Consult page 6 and 7 of your NARFE January 2019 Magazine for details.

NARFE's PRIORITIES FOR THE 116th CONGRESS

Recently elected NARFE National President Kenneth J. Thomas has published a list of NARFE priorities for the 116th Congress, (Consult page 4, of your January 2019 Magazine for details). These priorities include:

Protecting the earned retirement and health benefits of federal employees and retirees; Advocating for pay increases in 2020 and 2021;
Modifying postal reform proposals to preserve health care choices for postal retirees;
Enacting a full COLA for FERS retirees;
Supporting current efforts to reform the WEP;
Ensuring adequate oversight of proposals to reorganize the federal government;
Supporting reforms to the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program;
Providing substantive feedback on efforts to modernize the civil service;
Advocating for the Combat Zone Tax Parity Act.

For a more extensive and specific enumeration of NARFE's member-endorsed priorities, consult "NARFE's ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR THE 116th CONGRESS (2019-2920)" on pages 33-36, of your January 2019 NARFE Magazine. President Thomas advises NARFE members that "With new congressional leadership, new members of Congress, and new committee assignments, there come new agendas and new opportunities. Now is the time to look ahead and plan. Stay alert and stay involved." I suggest that the easiest way for you to stay alert and involved is to take advantage of NARFE's Legislative Action Center at www.narfe.org which provides a one-stop site that makes it easy for you to send a letter to your congressperson.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE MORALE PLUNGING

According to a report authored by Lisa Rein in The Washington Post on December 13, 2018, "Job satisfaction tumbled this year at a majority of federal agencies - a sign of falling morale and performance. After three years of steady improvement as the economy rebounded from the recession, the number of employees who would recommend their agency as a good place to work dropped at 60 percent of federal offices, the annual 'Best Places to Work in the Federal Government' rankings found. Agencies whose scores dropped cited a variety of reasons, from a lack of leadership to shifting policies on telework." What can you do to improve your personal situation? Remember that politicians interpret silence as approval. If you choose to behave like a pinata and do not take action to contact your congressperson, it is likely that you will continue to experience changing missions, vacancies from hiring freezes, high turnover among political appointees and labor management battles. So, make a difference and contact NARFE's Legislation Action Center at www.narfe.org to stay alert and involved.

**IT'S A NEW YEAR
VOLUNTEER TO HELP YOUR CHAPTER!!**

STATE LEGISLATION
Ed Bice

State Legislative Chair Paul Schwartz and Vice Chair Bob Doyle and Ed Bice went to Annapolis and distributed our 2019 Legislative pamphlet to the offices of all senators and delegates last month. Discussions of our priority issues were held with available staff members, if they were available. Many staff members were aware of and displeased that our legislative leaders failed to fix the itemization issue in the 2018 session which will result in some taxpayers paying more when they do their 2018 tax returns. The issue being: Permit Maryland taxpayers to itemize deductions on their state returns whether or not they use the standard deduction on their federal returns. We also visited the office of Lt. Governor Rutherford and met with his Special Assistant Paul Beatty. We wanted

to know what action Governor Hogan is planning to submit to the legislature to address the itemization issue this year. Last year he submitted bills that if passed would hold MD taxpayers harmless due to the new 2017 federal tax law. Paul said that discussion is being held but nothing is determined at this time. We learned during our visits that Sen. Seraffini (R) District 2 will introduce his itemization bill in the coming session.

Comptroller Franchot has reported that Maryland finished this year with a billion-dollar surplus which was due in part to the 2017 federal tax law. However, he warned that caution should be exercised by the state government as to expenditures next year.

If you itemize deductions on your state tax return last year, contact your legislators which are listed below by districts (you should know what district you live in) to tell them that they need to support a fix as noted above in the 2019 session. You can use your phone and call the toll-free number in Annapolis 1-800-492-7122. Tell the operator who you want to talk to. You will be put through to the legislator's office. Most likely a staff member will answer. Just identify yourself, name and address and say the issue you are calling about. Make the calls after January 9 as this date is the start of the session. Use the list below for your contacts.

Senators	Delegates
Dist. 21 Rosapepe	Dist. 21 Ben Barnes, Pena- Melnyk
Dist. 23 Peters	Dist. 23 Valentino-Smith, Holmes, Watson
Dist. 23 Benson	Dist. 24 Barron, Jazz Lewis
Dist. 33 Reilly & Malone	Dist. 33 Saab

Maryland Income Taxes Again
Dick Strombotne

If you usually claim the standard deduction on your Maryland income taxes, you can skip this article. It is intended to inform and advise people who usually claim itemized deductions on Maryland income taxes.

What is the problem? The big increase in the standard deduction on Federal tax makes it attractive for people to claim it for 2018. It saves money on federal taxes. If you do that then **you cannot claim itemized deductions on your MD taxes**. You can estimate how much your MD state and local taxes will increase easily. Look up the amount of itemized deductions on the MD tax return for 2017 Subtract the amount of MD standard deduction: \$4,500 for joint filers and \$2,250 for single filers. Multiply the result by 8%. That is the amount of the increase in your MD state and local taxes for 2018, roughly. If you don't like the result, read on.

Let your state legislators know that they need to roll back the increase in MD state and local income taxes on people who claim the Federal standard deduction. The Maryland General Assembly goes into its 90-day session January 9, just two days before our January 11 membership meeting. Call the toll-free number for the General Assembly, 1-800-492-7122, and tell the operator who you want to speak to. When you call a legislator's office a staff member will usually answer. Say who you are and that you are concerned about not being able to claim itemized deductions on your Maryland taxes.

Key legislators are members of the House Ways and Means Committee (HW&M) and the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee (SB&T.) The Chair of SB&T is Senator Nancy King, District 39. The Chair of HW&M is Del. Anne Kaiser, District 14. Delegate-elect Julie Palakovitch Carr, District 17, will be a new member of HW&M. These senators and delegates have fellow members from their districts who can be called and asked to support legislation to fix the problem.

After legislation is introduced to address the problem there will be hearings by the relevant committees. Usually, there is only about two weeks' notice of hearings. It is vitally important that NARFE members be present at those hearings to let the committee members know that the matter is important. You can park at the Navy-Marine stadium lot for \$5 and ride a shuttle to the General Assembly area of Annapolis for \$1. Hearings usually are scheduled to start at 1:00 pm and there is no telling when the bill of interest will be heard. Look for an email message from Chapter President Charlie Garfinkel to inform you about the key hearings. The website for Maryland General Assembly is at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmgafm1st.aspx?tab=home>. It is a marvelous source of information about committees, legislators, reports, etc.

TREASURERS REPORT	
Balance on: Oct 2018	\$ 11,174.42
Income:	\$ 730.82
Expenses:	\$ 299.46
Balance on: Nov 30	\$11,605.78
Reserve for Alzheimer's Fund	\$ 467.00

CHAPTER 1747 OFFICERS			
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PICTURES FROM THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON – BLUE DOLPHIN



**FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING - OSAKA GRILL & BUFFET
1633A CROFTON CENTRE, CROFTON, MD 21114**

**February 21, 2019
11:00a**

**Please join us for a presentation on an important topic followed
by a sumptuous meal**

6 Serving Stations + Sushi Bar

HELP YOUR CHAPTER

VOLUNTEER

**CHAPTER 1747 HAS SEVERAL
AVAILABLE POSITIONS**