



CHAPTER 236 SOUTH PUGET SOUND

2023 CHAPTER MEETING DATES AT 12 NOON VIA ZOOM

18 JULY
17 OCTOBER

Election of officers will be at the 17 October meeting.

Chapter website: narfewardistiv.org/Olympia-chapter236.

The ZOOM link will be sent out via email shortly before 18 July.

President's Message

As we enter July 2023, we continue to encounter more fresh challenges to our organization which by all accounts will continue into the foreseeable future. Congress continues to assail "America's Heartbeat" from every possible angle. Supposedly a government shutdown was eliminated by the agreement between the Administration and the Speaker of the House. However, members of the House are asserting the Debt Ceiling Agreement only established a spending ceiling not a floor and further cuts to spending are necessary. Congress will try to pass 12 appropriation bills before October to cover all government spending. House proposals to date call for an additional \$120 billion reduction in spending below the ceiling agreed upon. The House Appropriations sub-committees have already adopted bills that would cut spending for agriculture, the FDA and for energy and water development. More cuts are coming. Lower spending levels could make it harder for the House to reach agreement with the Senate. It is possible Federal agencies could have to shut down if the two chambers are unable to agree on spending levels by October. The end of the Fiscal Year is 30 September. Complicating all these spending issues is the insertion in various bills such as Defense Appropriations provisions on social issues such as abortion, transgender care for teens, diversity in training on DOD, etc. And of course, House members are recommending the usual list of cuts to Federal employee and retiree benefits. These include compute employee retirement annuities based on the highest 5 years of service rather than 3 years; increasing employee share of contributions to FERS and reducing or even eliminating COLA's to FERS and CSRS annuities; eliminating the FERS annuity supplement; reducing the rate of return of the TSP G fund that would make it worthless; changing FERS to a TSP benefit only; preventing TSP from including investments based on environmental issues which means TSP could no longer offer a mutual fund investment option: providing only a flat amount for the government share of the FEHB premium, and implement the Chained - CPI as the measure of the annual COLA's.

Based on what is happening in DC at this time, we as a chapter must continue to make our voices heard

by Congress. It doesn't matter if you write a letter in longhand or with a pencil and pen, pick up the phone to call your local Member of Congress's office, or log on and use the wonderful GEMS service provided on the NARFE website. **WHATEVER** the method, **MAKE YOUR CONCERNS KNOWN!!!** The numbers recorded of those who have contacted Congress in recent years is not what would be expected of an organization with a charter dedicated to political activism. We are as strong as we can make ourselves. Once again, please call or write to your Member of Congress on those issues which affect you most as a federal retiree.

Treasurer's Report

The 30 June balance is \$14,877.68.

Membership

Our chapter membership is 155. For the period from 1 April to 30 June: There were 2 new members, Tim Kerfoot of Yelm and Gregory Kiser of Centralia. A hearty welcome to our new NARFE members. During the same period 10 members renewed, one member Roxanne Nelson reinstated, and 2 members dropped for non-renewal. Also, during this time 3 members passed away: Donna Roney of Olympia, Glenavie Smith of Graham and Sam Jacob of Florida. Our condolences to their families. Our chapter member numbers are holding steady but not growing. When you have the opportunity promoting NARFE membership to an eligible friend or acquaintance is a desirable something to do. NARFE performs a vital role in advocating before Congress our interests as retirees and active federal workers. So, if you know someone who works or worked for the Feds, use your persuasive powers on them to join NARFE. Give them a *NARFE Magazine* and show them the application for membership. Moving or thinking about moving contact NARFE at 800-456-8410 ext 1 for membership to report change of address. Also email us at narfe236@gmail.com so we can update our local records. You may also call any of our chapter officers listed below.

Chapter Meetings

Because of the COVID Pandemic chapter meetings have been held via Zoom. We can begin to hold in-person meetings at local restaurants in either Olympia or Tacoma if there is enough interest. Please contact any of the chapter officers listed below as to your preference. We will also begin to invite local speakers on topics of interest to our meetings. Let us know what topics might interest you. Volunteers are needed for the vacant positions located at the end. Chapter 236 began in 1953, it would be a shame for it to close after all these years. Copies of the *NARFE Magazine* are needed to hand out at the health fairs in the fall. Our Membership Chair Bonnie Ecker is willing to pick them up from you if you live in Lacey/Olympia/Tacoma area if you can save your copies this year. The mission of NARFE is to support the Federal retirees. Let us know what we can do for you at the local level.

COLA UPDATE

The March CPI-W value is 298.382. This represents to date a 2.2% 2024 COLA according to the NARFE website.

AUGUST IS GRASS ROOTS ADVOCACY MONTH

Congress adjourns for the month of August and your congressional representatives will be home. Use this opportunity to meet with them to discuss issues important to you. On the NARFE website in the Advocacy section you can view proposed legislation NARFE is urging Congress to support.

Alzheimer's

The dates for the annual Walk to End Alzheimer's are now available: Olympia – Sept 16; Tacoma Sept 23; Seattle Sept 30. The Olympia walk meeting place is Heritage Park at 5th Ave and Water St downtown. Registration is at 10 am. The walk is 2 miles total with turn around points at ¼ mile and ½ mile. The Tacoma walk is at Dune Peninsula Park Ruston, 5361 Yacht Club Rd. Registration is at 10 am. The Seattle walk is at the Seattle Center, International Fountain. Registration at 9:30. A fee to walk is not required but walkers are asked to make a personal donation. Forms to make contributions to Alzheimer's research are on page 47 of the June/July *NARFE Magazine*. Be sure you write our chapter number 236 on the memo line of your check and on the donation form.

IRS ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECT FILING SYSTEM

Last month the IRS released a study examining the feasibility of Direct File, an IRS run electronic filing system for taxpayers. If implemented, Direct File would be a free online tax preparation and filing tool available to all taxpayers. The IRS plan is to launch this program with a scaled pilot program in 2024. In other words, a randomized controlled trial with a sample of randomly selected taxpayers. If finally implemented, this is a dramatic change to filing taxes. We all have heard about the complaints regarding the big tax preparation companies taking advantage of low-income and unknowing customers with extra fees and services not needed or even supposed to be free. These companies certainly are not going to be happy to see a loss of business. It seems if the IRS is allowed by Congress to implement a free filing system this would be of great benefit to many people including us retired Federal employees. (Source: Gov Executive Today 6/27/2023)

NARFE WEBINARS

NARFE provides expert guidance on federal benefit issues directly affecting current and former federal employees, as well as tips and tools to help ensure a safe and secure retirement for the federal community. Webinars are free to NARFE members, you must log in to the NARFE website to get the free price. If you need assistance logging in, please email loginhelp.org for help.

Of interest to our current employee members is a new webinar, Debunking Retirement Myths, available on Wednesday, 19 July at 11am Pacific Time. More than 40 past Webinars are archived on the website and may be viewed by members at any time. They cover topics such as planning for long term care costs, tax planning for retirement, estate planning, understanding Medicare Advantage plan options. Log on to narfe.org and click on Federal Benefits Institute.

WASHINGTON STATE FEDERATION

The Federation will hold a virtual annual meeting on September 27, 2023. All members are invited to join in. Training will be provided in several areas: service officer duties, digital signature set up, Federation Strategic Planning, Treasurer/Audit requirements, and AMS training.

President – Tony Merola – 253-564-0086
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Membership – Bonnie Ecker – [REDACTED]
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Elected Representatives

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