



NARFE's Legislative Accomplishments: Reviewing the 117th Congress (2021-2022)

NARFE and its members have a lot to be proud of with the close of the 117th Congress. The federal community walked away with numerous wins, the most important of which was the preservation of all federal retirement benefits and health care. Thank you to every member who helped achieve these accomplishments through your consistent support. Below are some accomplishments that NARFE helped secure.

PROTECTING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AND INSURANCE

NARFE's advocacy protected the earned health care benefits of retired US Postal Service employees and prevented unintended premium increases for all Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program participants by lobbying Congress to change leading postal reform legislation.

Before NARFE's changes, postal reform legislation mandated all current Postal Service retirees enroll in Medicare Part B or lose their federal retiree health benefits. This would have forced retirees to incur additional costs for the continued receipt of benefits, changing benefits after retirement and setting a dangerous precedent. However,

NARFE lobbied to preserve choice for postal retirees, allowing them to decide whether to enroll in Medicare Part B without the risk of losing their FEHB coverage.

NARFE also flagged a change in FEHB's structure that would have increased premiums for all participants. NARFE called for an actuarial analysis of the proposed structure, which led

Congress to address NARFE's concerns and amend the legislation to prevent premium increases.

With these changes set, postal reform passed the House and Senate and was signed into law in 2022, with its health benefit provisions taking effect starting in 2025.

SUPPORT FOR WEP/GPO REPEAL AND REFORM REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

- Thanks to NARFE's grassroots advocacy, legislation to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) gathered 305 cosponsors in the House of

THE FIRST EDITION of the NARFE Bill Tracker for the 118th Congress will be published in the April 2023 edition of *NARFE Magazine*. Bills from the previous Congress that were not enacted must be reintroduced and given a new bill number. The new Congress convened January 3, 2023. NARFE will use the Bill Tracker to provide monthly updates on legislation important to the federal community throughout the 118th Congress.

MYTH VS. REALITY

MYTH: Funds from NARFE's general fund, including member dues, go to NARFE's political action committee (PAC) and are used to defend earned benefits by electing Fed-friendly lawmakers.

REALITY: No dues money or any general funds from NARFE go to any political candidate. Only member contributions designated specifically for NARFE-PAC go to the PAC, and only funds from the PAC can be used to help NARFE allies campaign for election. NARFE-PAC is a separate, segregated NARFE account that is funded solely through specific member contributions. Please consider contributing during this NARFE-PAC month so the PAC has the funds to defend the federal community in 2023. Learn more about NARFE-PAC on pg. 22.

Representatives, surpassing the necessary 290 needed to place legislation on the House consensus calendar for a potential floor vote. This unprecedented level of support, representing 41 more cosponsors than during the previous Congress, led to the first-ever congressional markup of legislation to repeal both WEP and GPO.

- Legislation to reform the WEP, H.R. 2337, the Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act, had 190 cosponsors, 36 more cosponsors than during the entire previous Congress.
- Numerous other bills were submitted this Congress addressing WEP/GPO, including the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act, H.R. 5834, and the Wellbeing for Every Public Servant Act, H.R. 4788. A bill to expand Social Security, Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust, H.R. 5723, also included repeal of WEP/GPO, an addition from previous iterations thanks to NARFE's outreach.

OVERSIGHT TO IMPROVE OPM'S RETIREMENT SERVICES

- After learning of lengthy delays affecting survivor benefits processing, health insurance benefit updates and numerous other changes, NARFE requested congressional report language providing additional

oversight of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Retirement Services division. House congressional appropriators included NARFE's suggested language in a House-passed appropriations minibuss, pressuring OPM to report claim processing and call center statistics and improve service to federal annuitants.

- NARFE also supported the creation of an OPM Information Technology Working Capital Fund, which was included in an omnibus appropriations package and signed into law, granting the agency the opportunity to address longstanding IT challenges and undertake modernization efforts.

SCHEDULE F EXECUTIVE ORDER RESCINDED

- With NARFE's strong encouragement, President Biden rescinded the previous administration's Schedule F executive order a week into the new presidency. The order had created a new federal employment category that threatened to politicize tens of thousands of professional government positions.
- A bill to prevent the return of Schedule F, the Preventing a Patronage System Act of 2022, was introduced in the House and Senate. The House version of the bill, H.R. 302, passed the lower chamber as a standalone bill, as well as via

an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023.

ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION

- The NARFE-supported First Responders Fair RETIRE Act, H.R. 521, became law this year. It provides federal first responders with the opportunity to remain in the public safety retirement system should they decide to continue their federal service in a new position after sustaining a career-changing injury or illness on the job.
- The NARFE-endorsed Federal Firefighters Fairness Act also became law after it was included in the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act. The Act provides federal workers' compensation to federal firefighters who contract occupational illnesses, such as heart disease, lung disease, and other infectious diseases and cancers. This change aligns federal guidelines with those of the 49 states that recognize the dangers involved in fire protections services.
- The House passed the Chance to Compete Act, H.R. 6967, as part of a package of bills. The NARFE-endorsed bill would improve cross-agency hiring by allowing agencies to share assessments with other agencies, expand use of subject

SEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON P. 12



LEGISLATIVE RESOURCES

NARFE NewsLine – A weekly newsletter that goes out to NARFE members on Tuesdays and includes weekly recaps of legislative news, compiled by NARFE’s advocacy and communications teams.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER – A one-stop site to send a letter to Congress, and more, at www.narfe.org.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM P.9

matter experts in the hiring process, and shift focus on a candidate’s relevant experience and skills over self-ratings and degrees.

SECURING A FEDERAL PAY RAISE FOR EMPLOYEES IN 2022 AND 2023

NARFE helped secure a presidential alternative pay plan to increase employee pay by an average of 2.7 percent in 2022 and by an average 4.6 percent in 2023. Both increases were at parity with the military and tracked with recent private sector pay increases.

STRENGTHENING COLAS

- The Equal COLA Act, H.R. 304/S. 4221, was introduced in both chambers of Congress, gathering 34 cosponsors in the House, 15 more than the previous Congress. The Senate bill was newly introduced to the upper chamber after not having been in the previous Congress. The legislation would ensure that cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for Federal Employees Retirement

System (FERS) annuities match the measured change in consumer prices. Currently, FERS retirees do not receive a full COLA if consumer prices increase by more than 2 percent annually. If consumer prices increase between 2 and 3 percent, FERS COLAs round down to 2 percent. If consumer prices are above 3 percent, FERS COLAs are always 1 percentage point less.

- The Fair COLA for Seniors Act, H.R. 4315, which would change the basis of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) calculation from the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) to the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E), gathered 54 cosponsors this Congress, 15 more than the last Congress. When measuring costs experienced by seniors with the CPI-E, inflation is greater by an estimated 0.27 percent per year than what the CPI-W shows.

NARFE TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

In 2021, NARFE National President Ken Thomas testified

before the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations in a hearing considering the future of federal work. Thomas highlighted necessary reforms to attract and retain talent within the federal government.

NARFE’S CENTENNIAL RECOGNIZED BY CONGRESS

NARFE’s centennial was celebrated by Congress, with passage of S.Res.76, a resolution congratulating NARFE on its 100th anniversary. A separate bipartisan resolution, H.Res.131, was also introduced in the House of Representatives.

MSPB QUORUM RESTORED

After several years without a quorum, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)—which adjudicates appeals of personnel actions, among other duties—had three members confirmed by the Senate. Restoration of quorum allows MSPB to begin clearing out a five-year backlog of nearly 4,000 cases that have yet to receive decisions from the board.

—BY ROSS APTER, DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

ROUNDUP FROM P.11

The bill provides federal first responders with the opportunity to remain in the public safety retirement system should they decide to continue their federal service in a new position after

sustaining a career-changing injury or illness on the job.

NARFE’s National President at the time, Ken Thomas, touted the win, saying, “NARFE is proud to have supported this legislation and thanks

lawmakers and the president for honoring the service of first responders by removing this flaw in federal workforce policy.” ■

—BY JOHN HATTON, STAFF VICE PRESIDENT, POLICY AND PROGRAMS