



CHAPTER 236 SOUTH PUGET SOUND

CHAPTER MEETING DATE AT 12 NOON VIA ZOOM

17 OCTOBER

Election of officers will be at the 17 October meeting.

Chapter website: narfewadistiv.org/Olympia-chapter236.

The ZOOM link will be sent out via email shortly before 17 October.

President's Message

I hope everyone had a safe, enjoyable, fun, and uneventful summer. We certainly experienced a generous abundance of sunny weather, but hopefully no one was displaced by fires or another natural calamity. Our hearts continue to go out to those devastated by the fires in Lahaina, which surely has been a vacation destination for many of you. We pray for their full recovery,

By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will either have a government shutdown or agreement was reached by the House and Senate to fund the government. Once again, we must continue our insistence that our legislators look past ideological differences and take action to ensure our country's bills get paid promptly. We must insist the vital services our federal family provides daily continue without interruption to serve our citizens.

The October 2023 issue of the NARFE magazine explores several topics of significance that all Feds, both active and retired, should be aware. As always, this magazine continues to provide helpful information on everything from the status of bills in Congress (pp 14-17) to employment and retirement FAQs on pages 20 to 23. This magazine is a gold mine of important information that should be read and referenced from cover to cover as often as possible. As a reminder, the health benefits open season is from Monday 13 November until Monday 11 December.

NARFE National President Shackelford's message on page 4 alludes to Grassroots Advocacy and the outstanding work accomplished at LEGcon 23. Also, the fall Membership Drive is in full swing. National has created several useful links for members to use to introduce active and retired federal friends to NARFE, and what our organizations' goals are. I urge all of you to take a few minutes to explore the toolkits furnished by National, at www.narfe.org. Maybe there are some areas that might pique your interest and generate a few phone calls and a referral or two.

Stay alert for more information on a variety of topics presented in future issues of NARFE Magazine.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS – 2024

Volunteers are needed for several chapter positions: Vice-President, PAC, Service Officer, Membership, Alzheimer's Chair, and Programs. Our President Tony currently covers PAC and Service Officer, He needs help. Bonnie is no longer able to cover Membership for us. These functions in a chapter do not require a significant amount of time to perform. As the saying goes, many hands make for short work. If you are willing to serve in one of the positions call our President Tony Merola at 253-564-0086 or any other officer listed on the below.

Membership

Our chapter membership is 156. For the period from 1 July to 30 September 4 members renewed and we gained two new members, Eileen [REDACTED] of Gig Harbor and Denise [REDACTED] an Army civilian employee working in Germany. A hearty welcome to our new NARFE members. Our chapter member numbers are holding steady but not growing. If 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 permanently or just heading south for the Winter 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 for assistance.

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, Lacey, 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. At the October meeting we will decide the meeting dates for next year.

COLA UPDATE

The August CPI-W index value of 301.551 represents a 3.4% increase over the last 12 months. The monthly increase is 0.6%. It is estimated the 2024 COLA will be 3.2%. The Federal Reserve announced 20 September interest rates will remain the same for now. The 2024 COLA will be announced in mid-October when the September CPI-W index value is released.

2023 FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Fall Membership drive runs from 1 September to 31 December. Current members can earn \$10.00 for each new member they recruit, as well as other prizes: See pg.50 of the September NARFE magazine or pg. 6 of the October edition.

VACCINES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend you receive the vaccines for the 3 big respiratory viruses: The updated Covid vaccine and the vaccines for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and influenza. Contact your doctor's office or pharmacy to schedule your vaccinations.

Treasurers' Report

The September 30 balance is \$15,242.35.

Alzheimer's

Forms to make contributions to Alzheimer's research are on page 49 of the September NARFE Magazine. Be sure you write our chapter number 236 on the memo line of your check and on the donation form.

FEDERAL LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM (FLTCIP)

I assume at least some of our chapter members purchased a FLTCIP policy and have received a recent letter from OPM advising you of a significant increase in rates. You will have to decide whether to pay the new rates or select from among options for a reduced benefit amount, a cut in inflation protection or reduced benefit period to keep the current rates. A decision is required by 9 November. Your newsletter letter editor and wife purchased policies about 15 years ago through an insurance agent. The cost was reasonable and the same for several years but in recent years there have been cost increases and the increase for next year is the biggest yet. We had to think about whether to accept the increase or select from three options for reduced benefits and thereby a lower price. It comes down to can one still afford the insurance at the increased cost. If you can, it is better to keep the current coverage and pay the increase. The US Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 70% of adults who survive to age 65 develop the need for long term care services and support before they die and 40% will need some paid services over their lifetime. In other words, the cost of the care you receive will exceed the cost of the plan premiums you paid. As of December 2022, the plan had 260,000 enrollees and paid out a total of \$2.4 billion in claims with an average claim of \$90,000.

FEDERAL HEALTH BENEFITS OPEN SEASON

The open season to enroll, change plans or plan options is November 13 to December 11. Health plan premiums will rise on average 7.7% in 2024. Dental plans will increase by an average of 1.4% and Vision Plans by 1.1%. Additional benefits coming in 2024 include covering of FDA approved anti-obesity medication and Improved access to mental health and substance abuse disorder services including telehealth at low cost or no cost sharing. You can find a good overview of the plan changes for 2024 on pg.36 of the NARFE magazine. Just a reminder to our Postal Service Members, the separate Postal Service Health Benefits coverage starts in 2025.

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