



CHAPTER 236 SOUTH PUGET SOUND

CHAPTER MEETING DATE AT 12 NOON

18 February
20 May
15 July
21 Oct

Location: Ram Restaurant and Brewery. 8100 Freedom Lane NE, Lacey, take I 5 exit 111

Chapter website: [narfewadistiv.org/Olympia-chapter 236](http://narfewadistiv.org/Olympia-chapter-236).

Federation Website: www.narfe.wa.org

President's Message – Tony Merola

I want to wish all of you a Happy New Year and sincere congratulations to all elected Chapter officers in our federation. I am privileged to have been elected as your Federation President and will definitely follow in the footsteps of past Federation Presidents. These leaders have accomplished remarkable things and have proven to be wonderful examples of leadership. I can only hope to emulate them in the best way I know how during this most challenging year ahead.

We have arrived at a particularly challenging, turbulent and worrisome year at with the arrival of a new Presidential administration for the next four years. We certainly have something noteworthy to celebrate when the Social Security Fairness Act was signed by President Biden on January 5th of this year. This action will serve to address chronic inequities in a system which had unfairly penalized federal workers and other governmental civil servants who spent their professional working careers looking to better the lives of the citizens they supported. I remain concerned about two pieces of legislation which concern federal personnel policies and procedures. HR 3115, and S 1496, Public Service Reform Act, would make all federal employees at will and enable workers to be removed for cause. This bill would abolish the Merit Systems Protection Board and severely restrict removal appeals to whistleblower retaliation claims and EEOC complaints before the US Court of Appeals.

HR 5779 and S3262, The Fiscal Commission Act, and the Fiscal Stability Act, would formally set up a commission on stability and reform. (Read "DOGE") These pieces of legislation, which NARFE strongly opposes, would severely gut the Civil Services ability to conduct the nation's business, slash departmental funding, and destroy the organizational integrity of our federal family and reduce it to a spoils system, undoing every step ever made in civil service reform from 1871 onwards. Please pay close attention to what your congresspeople are doing. As I have said before, your NARFE publication is full of useful information on the tracking progress of important legislation affecting us.

Take the time to write an action letter about an issue you care about. As you obtain background information on an issue, a straightforward way to do this is to access NARFE's legislation action page which provides useful letter templates to personalize your letter as proper. The way you create a message, whether via a congressional website "plug and play" icon on their website, a personal e-mail, a phone call to your local congressional office or a handwritten letter is up to you. But please let your congressperson know how you feel.

February Meeting

We will have a speaker for our 18 February meeting. It is Linda Bardeaux of the Alzheimers Association. She will present an overview of this illness and then talk about the Awareness Walks in Olympia and Seattle.

Membership

Our chapter membership is 151. For the period from 1 September 24 to 1 December we had 4 new members join NARFE, Juan [REDACTED] of Puyallup, Frank [REDACTED] of University Place, Andrew [REDACTED] of Gig Harbor, Kathleen [REDACTED] of Lacey. Starting off the new year we have 2 new members in January, Sharon [REDACTED] of Lakewood and Brennan [REDACTED] of Shelton. A hearty welcome to our new chapter members. We had 8 members join in 2024. Information as to members who renewed or were dropped from the rolls is not available as NARFE is working on revising the chapter activity report. Our chapter member numbers are holding steady. 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.

COLA UPDATE

The December 2024 CPI-W index value of 309.067 is a .34% increase from the third quarter of 2024 average of 308.729. It appears the Federal Reserve effort to bring down inflation is working. It is too early to guess what a 2026 COLA might be.

Treasurers' Report

The July 31 balance is \$4371.40. Expenses for the year totaled \$1,524.12. Revenue was \$1,072.08 which was mainly from the chapter dues forwarded to us by NARFE. Your annual chapter membership fee is \$7.

LEGISLATIVE

We all know now the Social Security Fairness Act long promoted by NARFE was finally passed by Congress and signed by President Biden. It provides for retroactive benefits payable January to December 2024. It is estimated that canceling the Windfall Elimination Provisions (WEP) will apply to state, local government and federal employees and the pension offset (GPO) to federal retirees. It is

going to take some time for the Social Security Administration to identify those eligible and calculate the amount owed. There are critics complaining that the law is unfair to other beneficiaries of Social Security. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the Act will add \$195 billion to the federal deficit over a decade. There is concern the Social Security Trust Fund now will be insolvent by the mid-2030s. However, it is unlikely the law will be reconsidered and revised leaving Congress with the tough task of shoring up the trust fund sooner rather than later.

The law means backdated payments to Americans who were previously not eligible for full Social Security benefits due to their job. It primarily affects those in public service roles, such as teachers, firefighters, police officers and federal and local government workers.

The WEP reduced Social Security benefits for employees from public sector jobs, such as state and federal employees, that are or were not required to make Social Security payroll tax contributions, even if they contributed to Social Security through other jobs over the course of their career and are otherwise eligible for benefits. This provision impacted on some 2 million beneficiaries.

The GPO decreased spousal or survivor benefits for retired federal, state, and local government workers who did not pay into Social Security through payroll taxes. This rule impacted nearly 800,000 retirees.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that eliminating the WEP would result in an average increase of \$360 in monthly payments. Eliminating the GPO would raise the monthly benefit for 380,000 recipients whose benefits are based on living spouses by \$700 a month and for the 390,000 surviving spouses \$1,190 a month. For the nearly 3 million Americans entitled to backdated benefits, the amount should average \$4,320. "

FEDERAL BENEFITS INSTITUTE

As you consider the recent executive orders of President Trump, there are going to be significant changes to the civil service workforce. There is a new WEBINAIR which was broadcast 30 January, Know Your Rights and Obligations Following Trump Executive Orders. The speaker is James Eisenmann former General Counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board presenting an overview of the legal implications of the executive orders. This is a matter about which our active employee members need as much information as possible. If did not view it on 30 January, it is available in the archive of past WEBINAIRS on the NARFE website for viewing at your convenience on You Tube.

WESTERN WASHINGTON DISTRICT VP – BEA BULL

Hello Olympia/South Puget Sound chapter members – I wish you a happy and healthy New Year!

The AMS database upgrade is still ongoing. It was explained at the December National Executive Board meeting that member dues go to an entity called "lockbox." Lockbox compiles the information and transmits it to NARFE National where it should be integrated with the AMS database. That is the step that still isn't functioning correctly. Therefore, staff in the National office have been manually inputting the information, meaning there's room for errors.

So, if you know you've paid your dues but notice you're no longer receiving the *NARFE Magazine* (note that January and February were combined in one issue so you won't receive another issue until March) or your chapter newsletter, please reach out to the National office or one of your chapter officers to investigate what happened with your membership. Due to a data entry error, several chapter members were transferred to National-only status. NARFE National staff and chapter membership chairs worked to correct the error but some members may have been missed. I suggest retaining a copy of your payment method in case you need to prove that you paid for both National and chapter membership.

At the 28 January Washington State Federation (WSF) Advisory Committee meeting we'll discuss a virtual 2025 WSF Annual Meeting and a 2026 WSF election and in-person conference. I plan to be on the site selection committee for the 2026 conference and my goal is to find a venue on the I-5 corridor north of Seattle. If you'd like to help with the planning process, please contact me.

Thank you for another year of NARFE membership!

Directions to the Ram Restaurant in Lacey

If you have not driven on I 5 to northeast Lacey and taken the Marvin Road exit for several years, the overpass to cross the freeway has been changed to direct all traffic to drive on the left. So, from the north there are 2 lanes on the off ramp to turn south. Take the right of those 2 lanes. On the overpass the get into the right lane it will veer to right as you cross the overpass. At that point go directly to the far-right turn lane of Marvin Road. Turn right at the first intersection, a very short distance from the overpass. After the turn you will come to a traffic circle. Take the first exit from the traffic circle and as you turn right you will see the Ram Restaurant straight ahead.

If you are coming from the south on I 5, take exit 111 and stay in the right exit lane. In a short distance, you should veer to the right and in a short distance you will come to the traffic circle. Take the 3rd exit from the circle and straight ahead is the Ram Restaurant.

Chapter Officers

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