

CHAPTER 236 SOUTH PUGET SOUND

CHAPTER MEETING DATE AT 12 NOON

20 May
15 July
21 Oct

Location: Super Buffet Chinese Restaurant 1390 Galaxy Dr NE, Lacey, exit 111 I5

Chapter website located on Federation Website: www.narfe.org/wa

President's Message – Tony Merola

This is an excerpt and summary of an article (*What's Happening Is Not Normal. America Needs an Uprising That Is Not Normal*) written by NY Times columnist David Brooks dated April 17, 2025. Please read it and understand what dire straits we are in at this time. Many of the second and third order effects will likely impact federal benefits, which include FEHBP insurance premiums and retirement contributions for active federal employees.

David Brooks explores the erosion of key institutions that uphold civilization—like legal systems, universities, and international alliances—arguing that Trumpism is a concentrated effort to dismantle these structures to consolidate power. He emphasizes the need for a united civic uprising across various sectors to counter this authoritarian trend. Brooks also highlights the importance of reforming institutions to address their flaws, such as exclusivity in elite universities, which contribute to societal divides. He advocates for both immediate resistance to Trumpism and a long-term vision for a fairer society that tackles its root causes. The article calls for coordinated, nonviolent movements inspired by historical examples to defend democratic values and stop the consolidation of power. The article, written by David Brooks, argues that Trump's actions threaten fundamental institutions that uphold civilization, such as legal systems, universities, international alliances, and businesses. Brooks asserts that Trumpism is primarily about consolidating power and dismantling structures that might restrain it.

The piece suggests that Trump's attacks on law firms, universities, global trade, and other institutions are part of a broader effort to weaken opposition. Brooks calls for a united civic uprising across various sectors—law, business, academia, nonprofits, and science—to counter Trump's influence with organized resistance. He highlights historical nonviolent movements that successfully pushed back against authoritarianism, emphasizing that such efforts require coordination and clear messaging.

Additionally, Brooks notes that institutions must acknowledge their own flaws—such as elite universities' exclusivity—and work toward reforms. He argues for both a short-term strategy to oppose Trump and a long-term vision for a fairer society that addresses the causes of Trumpism. Ultimately, he advocates for a collective movement to defend democratic values and stop Trump's consolidation of power.

May Meeting

The speaker at our May meeting will be Peter Ramsey, the Outreach Director of Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland's office in Tacoma. This should be a very informative presentation.

Membership

Our chapter membership is 159. For the period 1 February to 30 April we had 5 new members join NARFE, Bren [REDACTED] of Olympia, David [REDACTED] of Tacoma, Tony [REDACTED] of Puyallup, Linda [REDACTED] of Dupont, and Erika [REDACTED] of Olympia. During this period 5 former NARFE members were reinstated, Rosemary [REDACTED] of Olympia, Carol [REDACTED] of Lakewood, Timothy [REDACTED] of Olympia, Pamela [REDACTED] of Dupont, and Janey [REDACTED] of Federal Way. One current member, Richard [REDACTED], transferred in from the Vancouver Chapter. A hearty welcome to our new chapter members.

Six members were dropped from the rolls for non-renewal and 15 members renewed membership. Our chapter numbers have increased. We averaged around 150 members for most of last year. It is likely what is going on to the federal workforce is contributing to this. However, the severe downsizing of the federal workforce does not bode well for the future. If you have the opportunity, promoting NARFE membership to an eligible friend or acquaintance is a desirable thing to do. NARFE performs a vital role in advocating before Congress our interests as retirees and active federal workers. 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 March 2025 CPI-W index value of 313.250 is a monthly increase of 0.25% and a 1.46% increase from the CPI-W average for 3rd quarter 2024. Inflation appears to have moderated under the Federal Reserve policies. This could change significantly if the government's tariff increases in imported goods remain in place.

Treasurers' Report

The March 30 balance is \$14,339.78. Expenses for the month totaled \$331.77. Chapter dues forwarded to us by NARFE were \$114.67.

Newsletter Editor's Comments

The United States has entered a new political phase that it has not experienced since the great depression of the 1930's when the New Deal greatly expanded the functions of the government. We now have a president and a political party that is embarked on a near total restructure of the Federal government so it will assume a far more limited role in the country and in the world. We should not be surprised. I think many of us older members remember Senator Barry Goldwater and President Ronald Reagan. Goldwater was not interested in an effective government, he just wanted it smaller. Reagan famously stated government was the problem. What we used to call the radical right back in the 1960s is now in power. President Trump is a willing tool of this group. Essentially, it is an effort to return to a limited do-nothing government, to use civil rights laws to protect discrimination of white citizens, end diversity and inclusion programs throughout the country, put gay and trans-gender people back in the closet, and get as many non-citizens deported as possible. The new Trump appointed head of the Civil

Rights Division of the Justice Department directed the staff lawyers to now focus on combatting antisemitism, the participation of transgender athletes in women's sports, anti-Christian bias, and the presence of Democrats "woke ideology" in the nation's schools and colleges. As a result, about half of the 380 staff lawyers of the division have already or are planning to leave the Justice Department. Cuts to the departments and agencies of the government are supposedly needed to save money and help reduce the federal deficit. The true purpose is to destroy what they call the deep (administrative) state and to ensure only politically conservative individuals who support the President's policies are placed in government jobs at all levels. This will be achieved by converting large numbers of positions to Schedule F, or what is now called Schedule/Policy Career becoming appointed positions.

This line of thinking is not going to easily be stopped. The question is, after all government departments and agencies are stripped down to a barely functioning level, will the public at large realize this isn't what they really voted for? It is both interesting and sad watching all this unfold. Are the federal courts going to restrict or even stop what the President is doing not only regarding the workforce but the many other aspects of American life? What can we do in NARFE? We must continue to promote the interests of employees and retirees to the public at large and to our representatives in Congress. We cannot be silent.

The news website, GovExec.com, has many informative articles on the latest agency downsizing efforts. To track progress of Project 2025, the Heritage Foundations blueprint to eliminate federal programs and cut spending, go to www.project2025observer.

WEP/GPO

Your newsletter editor is one of those retirees who became eligible for Social Security based upon my wife's FERS retirement. I was wondering if anything would happen, but a letter arrived from Social Security early in March giving the amount of the back payment for 2024 through February 2025 and the monthly payment thereafter beginning this April. After some difficulties, as Social Security did not have the current bank account information for me, the full backpay amount showed up in my bank account in early April. I recommend everyone open an internet account with Social Security so you can access your record of social security payments, and to change your address or bank deposit information when necessary. It was easy to do. I called the Olympia Social Security Office for assistance and waited only about 5 minutes to speak to an individual who, after providing assistance, told me he had elected to take the early out offer and had only 2 more hours to work.

WESTERN WASHINGTON DISTRICT VP – BEA BULL

Greetings chapter members,

There's still time to register for **LEGcon25** (the registration fee is now \$160) and receive a \$100 rebate from the Washington State Federation, and your chapter may have funds to cover the balance. Go to <https://legcon.narfe.org> to register. Forward your registration confirmation email to WSF Treasurer Arlene Patton at apatton1202@outlook.com to put your name on the list of members to receive the rebate. After the event, complete the WSF Form F-1 found on the WSF website at www.narfe.org/wa/resources/documents/forms and send it to Arlene along with a short paragraph describing your participation in the event. Please reach out to me if you have questions or need assistance with the rebate process.

Washington Federation members will **vote on a WSF Bylaws Amendment in June**. You will find a prominent link on the WSF home page at www.narfe.org/wa for the changes and voting instructions. You will also receive email voting instructions from WSF Secretary Curtis Price on 16 June 2025. If you are unable to vote using the online platform link in that email, please contact him at curtvprice@gmail.com.

Member input is needed regarding the **2026 WSF Biennial Conference planned for September 17-18, 2026, in Lynnwood**. We need to know what would entice you to attend, e.g., speakers, activities, etc. Please email me at tbkbull@gmail.com by 1 July 2025.

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