



CHAPTER 236 SOUTH PUGET SOUND

2026 CHAPTER MEETINGS at 12 NOON

17 February
19 May
21 July
20 October

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

For active and retired federal employees, 2026 is shaping up to be a year of significant change, marked by policy shifts, workforce restructuring, and ongoing legal challenges that will directly impact careers and benefits.

Key Federal Workforce Challenges for 2026

Here is a summary of the major areas of change to monitor:

- Workforce Stability & Size
 - The Threat: Over 300,000 employees left government in 2025, mostly through incentives. "Reductions in force" (RIFs/layoffs) are paused until January 30, 2026, but remain an administration priority.
 - The Impact: Increased job insecurity and potential for further workforce reductions in the new year.
- Civil Service Protections
 - The Threat: Revival of "Schedule F" (now called Schedule Policy/Career), which would strip civil service protections from tens of thousands, making them at-will employees.
 - The Impact: Erosion of traditional, non-partisan civil service protections against political interference.
- Health Benefits & Protections
 - The Threat: Several FEHB/PSHB plans dropped for 2026. New policies excludes coverage for gender-affirming care.
 - The Impact: Reduced plan choices. Legal complaint filed against the transgender care exclusion as discriminatory.
- Agency Stability & Mission
 - The Threat: Major reorganizations at agencies like USDA, State, Education, and CFPB, involving office closures and mission shifts. USAID has been shut down.
 - The Impact: Uncertainty about workplace location, job function, and the future of entire agencies.

The Path Forward: Advocacy & Vigilance

In this environment, proactive engagement is crucial. NARFE's advocacy efforts are more important than ever. The organization develops its priorities based on member surveys and the political landscape to defend your earned pay, benefits, and the merit-based civil service.

What You Can Do:

- Stay Informed: Regularly check NARFE.org for updates and official guidance.
- Engage in Advocacy: Respond to NARFE's calls to action. Collective advocacy has proven effective, as seen in the recent court-ordered halt to layoffs.
- Review Your Benefits: If you haven't already, assess your 2026 health plan elections during Open Season, noting changes and default plan options.

The coming months will require vigilance as these stories develop. By staying informed and supporting advocacy, the federal community can navigate these challenges.

I hope this overview is helpful. To focus on what matters most to you, would you be interested in more data?

Membership

Our chapter membership is 159. For the period from 1 October 25 to 30 January 26 we had 7 new members join NARFE, Danielle [REDACTED] of Bonney Lake, Patricia [REDACTED] of Chehalis, Lawrence [REDACTED] of Tacoma, Jennie [REDACTED] of Bonney Lake, Harvey [REDACTED] of Ocean Shores, Curt [REDACTED] of Ashford, and Sterling [REDACTED] of Lacey. A hearty welcome to our new members. Five members were dropped for nonrenewal and 17 members renewed membership. Thank you to our renewing members. Three members passed away during this period David [REDACTED], Agnes [REDACTED], and Douglas [REDACTED].

Treasurers' Report

The December 31st 2025 balance is \$13,326.03. Expenses for the month totaled \$582.64 and income for the month was \$138.88.

HOUSE AND SENATE REACH BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL BUDGET BILLS

Negotiators in both chambers have reached agreement to fund all federal departments and agencies for fiscal year 2026. A final six-bill package is expected to be passed by the Senate in the week of 26 January. It is expected all funding bills will be sent to the president before the end of 30 January and if the President signs them there will be no government shutdown. Negotiations between the parties resulted in either substantially reducing the administration proposed cuts in agency spending, in a few cases no cuts at all and in a few others increased spending. However, the shooting of the ICU nurse employed by the Veterans Affairs Department in Minneapolis by Border Patrol agents has complicated the situation. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. said in response to the shooting that his party would not agree to what is a final six-bill funding package if it contains DHS appropriations. Half of the 12-annual must-pass spending bills for fiscal 2026 have already cleared both houses of Congress. The remaining six bills already approved by the House are still pending in the Senate. So, it remains to be seen what will happen. Lawmakers in the Senate could opt to approve five of the six bills and negotiate separately over the Department of Homeland Security. This would require new votes in both houses of Congress. Another side effect of the efforts by the government to deport the undocumented immigrants in the country.

Key agencies will be funded as follows: Defense \$838.7 billion, a less than 1% increase; HHS (not including the FDA) a less than 1% decrease; Education \$79 billion, no change in funding; HUD 77.3 billion; DHS \$64.4 billion, a 1% decrease; Transportation \$25.1 billion, a less than 1% decrease; Social Security Administration \$12.3 billion, essentially no change; Labor \$13.7 billion, a 1% increase.

It is interesting to look at some of the other agencies. The IRS will get a 7% cut rather than 20%. The enforcement arm of the IRS will be cut 7% rather than 34%. The Congress rejected all cuts to the Small Business Administration and instructed the SBA to boost staffing in its district offices. The administration proposed eliminating the elections security grants from the Election Assistance Commission; instead Congress tripled its funding to \$45 million. Congress also will fund U.S. contributions to the United Nations and other international organizations, which the administration had sought to eliminate. The Office of Management and Budget had requested a 13% increase, but this was rejected and funding kept at current level.

WESTERN WASHINGTON DISTRICT VP – BEA BULL

2026 Region IX Symposium

The federation is holding another Region IX Symposium. It will be in Ellensburg, Washington on October 1 – 3. Stay tuned for more details or visit the federation Meeting/Events page, click on Meetings, then Region IX Symposium. The federation has budgeted funds for member scholarships.

2026 WSF Nominating Committee

WSF President Tony Merola is looking for volunteers to serve on the WSF Nominating Committee. The committee:

- (1) Prepares and sends out a nomination/election announcement.
- (2) Sets the election schedule.
- (3) Reviews nominations or declarations of candidacy for federation-level officer positions.
- (4) Examines candidates' eligibility and qualifications to service.
- (5) Coordinates with the biennial conference committee to provide a candidate list for election by the membership.
- (6) Transmits the election information to NARFE for input in NARFE Magazine.
- (7) Tallies votes and notifies the executive committee of election results.
- (8) Prepares election results report for the federation biennial conference.

Please contact Tony if you are interested in serving on this important committee.

2026 WSF Officer Elections

The four federation officer positions are open for candidates: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. You can also run for my position: Western Washington District Vice President. For more information about the requirements for each position, please visit the federation website, click on Resources, then Documents, then [Policies and Procedures](#), then WSF Standing Rules. The 2025 F-10 *Chapter and Federation Officers Manual* can be downloaded from the National website under Officer Resources, or email me for a copy.

We have a busy year ahead so stay informed and engaged!

Bea Bull
Western Washington District VP
360 286 7798
tbkbull@gmail.com

FEDERAL INCOME TAX PREPERATION ASSISTANCE

Go to the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Locator on the internet. If you allow the site to identify your location it will bring up all of tax aide sites within 50 miles of where you live.

COLA UPDATE

September 2025 CPI-W index value 318.139 monthly increase of 0.26%: October no data: November 317.414 minus 0.23%; December 317.014 minus 0.13%. Inflation would seem to be moderating a bit. But the full impact of the tariffs on imports has not yet been felt in the economy.

ALHEIMER'S

Interesting item from *Science Daily* dated 26 January. Alzheimer's may destroy memory by flipping a single molecular switch that tells neurons to prune their own connections. Researchers found that both amyloid beta and inflammation converge on the same receptor, triggering synapse loss. Surprisingly, neurons aren't passive victims-they actively respond to these signals. Targeting this receptor could offer a new way to protect memory beyond current amyloid-focused drugs. The finding suggests Alzheimer's treatment may need to protect synapses directly, not just breakup plaques. Checks payable to NARFE Alzheimer's Research should be mailed to Alzheimer's Association, 225 N Michigan Ave, 17th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601-7633. Be sure to write Olympia Chapter 236 on the notation line.

Chapter Officers

President – Tony Merola – 253-564-0086
TIGER7565@aol.com

PAC – Tony Merola

Vice president – Timothy Leadingham – [REDACTED]

Secretary – Mary Traxler – [REDACTED]

Treasurer – Gorgon Craig – [REDACTED]

Newsletter – Milton Oster – [REDACTED]
narfe236@gmail.com

Membership Chair – Rosemary I Grec – [REDACTED]

Service Officer – Tony Merola

Mailing Address: NARFE Chapter 236

Chapter Email: narfe236@gmail.com

PO Box 8554,
Lacey, WA 98509-8554

Elected Representatives

Senator Patty Murray
1301 A St, Suite 213
Tacoma, WA 98402-4216
Tel: 253-572-3636

Senator Maria Cantwell
950 Pacific Ave #615
Tacoma, WA 98402
Tel: 253-572 2281

Marilyn Strickland
6000 Main St SW Suite 3B
Lakewood, WA 98499
No phone number listed

Marilyn Strickland
420 College St SE, Suite 3000
Lacey, WA 985033
Tel: 360-459-8514

Emily Randall
1102 A St Ste 326
Tacoma, WA 98402
Tel: 253-272-3515

Kim Schrier
1445 NW Mall St. Suite 4
Issaquah, WA 98027
Tel: 425-657-1001