



NARFE NEWSLETTER

GREATER BOWIE-CROFTON AREA CHAPTER 1747 National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

Volume 40 No. 2

Web: narfe.org/chapter1747
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October 2021

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS are held at the Bowie Senior Center, 14900 Health Center Drive Bowie, 20716 in Room 4. Meeting dates are the third Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM except in July and August. There is never a charge to attend and all meetings are open to the public. Please check your current newsletter or our website for any changes.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS are held the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 125, Bowie Senior Center. All chapter members are welcome.

POSTAL ADDRESS: NARFE Chapter 1747, P.O. Box 504, Bowie, MD 20718

NOTE: Chapter meetings are cancelled when Prince George's County schools are closed due to inclement weather. Otherwise, meetings are held as scheduled.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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| Oct 7 | Executive Board Meeting
Bowie Senior Center, 10:00am |
| Oct 14 | Understanding Medicare Advantage Options
Federal Benefits Institute Webinar, 2:00pm |
| Oct 21 | Health Fair, Kenhill Center, 2614 Kenhill Dr, 10:00am |
| Oct 28 | Federal Dental & Vision Insurance Explained
Federal Benefits Institute Webinar, 2:00pm |
| Nov 4 | Executive Board Meeting
Bowie Senior Center, 10:00am |
| Nov 4 | Which FEHB Health Plan is Right for You?
Federal Benefits Institute Webinar, 2:00pm |
| Nov 18 | Healthy Living for Brain and Body
Shaunda Bellamy, Bowie Senior Center, 10:00am |

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Frank Lee

Congress is currently working on two infrastructure bills. The first is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill which has been approved by the Senate and sent to the House.

This is a roughly \$1 trillion proposal to improve the nation's roads, bridges, pipes, ports and Internet connections. The 69-to-30 vote follows weeks of turbulent private talks and fierce public debates. The result is a bill that is less than the roughly \$2.2 trillion American Jobs Plan that Biden put forward this spring, but one that every Democrat along with 19 Republicans, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) supported.

The bill proposes more than \$110 billion to replace and repair roads, bridges and highways, and \$66 billion to boost passenger and freight rail. The

infrastructure plan includes an additional \$55 billion to address issues in the U.S. water supply, such as an effort to replace every lead pipe in the nation. It allocates \$65 billion to modernize the country's power grid. And it devotes billions in additional sums to rehabilitating waterways, improving airports and expanding broadband Internet service.

Lawmakers also authorized funding to improve the environment and respond to the oft-deadly consequences of a fast-warming planet. The aid includes \$7.5 billion to build out a national network of electric-vehicle charging stations, a major priority for President Biden. And it apportions \$47 billion to respond to wildfires, droughts, coastal erosion, heat waves and other climate crises that have wrought significant economic havoc nationwide.

On August 24, the House approved a \$3.5 trillion budget to address infrastructure issues omitted from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. The House bill is using a legislative process called reconciliation that enables them to write a tax and spending bill that can bypass a Republican filibuster. This process also enables Democrats to pass the bill in the Senate with a majority instead of a two-thirds vote.

Republicans used this process under President Trump to pass a deficit expanding tax cut that primarily benefited the wealthy. Democrats are using this process to pass new social programs on a party-line vote.

The 220-212 party-line vote came after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Cal) resolved a revolt from her party's moderate-leaning lawmakers. There is no Republican support for the bill. Under the bill, Democrats have pledged to expand Medicare, invest sizable sums in education and family-focused programs, and devote new funds toward combating climate change. It proposes to finance the new spending through tax hikes targeting wealthy corporations, families and investors, and rolling back tax cuts imposed under President Trump. The budget plan is a centerpiece of President Biden's economic agenda unveiled earlier this year. Along with expanding Medicare, this plan aims to lower prescription drug costs and expand other federal safety net programs.

Democrats in Congress broadly support the goals of the package, but there are serious differences between the party's liberal and moderate wings over how much to spend, and the extent to which they should finance it through tax increases setting the stage for serious negotiating between members from both wings of the party in September. A vote on the bipartisan bill is scheduled for September 27 while the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill must be voted on by the end of September.

Passage of the \$3.5 trillion bill in the Senate would require all Senate Democrats to vote for it and for Vice President Harris to cast the deciding vote.

Electronic Copy of the Newsletter

Some of our members have elected to receive electronic copies of our newsletter. They receive a monthly E-mail with a link to the newsletter which they can print on their computer. The advantages of receiving an electronic copy of the newsletter is that you would receive the newsletter three days sooner and the chapter would not have to pay for printing and mailing a copy of the newsletter to you. Please send me an E-mail if you would like to receive electronic copies of the newsletter. You do not need to take any action if you would like to continue receiving hard copy newsletters.

Holiday Luncheon

We will be holding our Holiday Luncheon on Thursday, December 16 at the Nautilus Diner, 1709 Transportation Drive in Crofton. The cost of the luncheon will be \$32/person which will include the cost of the entrée, gratuity, and tax. The meal will include the following choice of entrée: Half Roast Chicken w/Stuffing, Broiled Tilapia, Roast Meatloaf w/Mushroom Gravy, Corned Beef and Cabbage, and Broiled Pork Chops. Each meal will include a cup of soup, baked potato and mixed vegetables. All meals will be served with coffee, tea, or soda and include a choice of strawberry shortcake or chocolate mousse for dessert. Attendees will give their choice of entrée to the server at the luncheon. Please make your reservation for the luncheon by sending your registration form and check to NARFE Chapter 1747, P.O. Box 504, Bowie, MD 2018. We look forward to seeing you at this celebration of the holidays.

Coronavirus Status in Maryland

The 7-day average of new coronavirus cases in Maryland is currently 1,073 cases/day. 63% of people in Maryland have completed their coronavirus vaccinations while 81% of Marylanders have received at least 1 dose of the coronavirus vaccine. More people need to be vaccinated since most new cases are occurring in unvaccinated people. Adolescents 12-15 years of age are now eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

Climate Change Creates Stronger Hurricanes

Scientists had been bracing for the worst since the moment forecasters identified a tropical depression forming last week. The Gulf of Mexico in August is always a hotbed of hurricane formation. "This time of year, it's like bathtub water," said Brian Tang, an atmospheric scientist at the University at Albany in New York.

Lately, conditions in the ocean have been exceptionally bad. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, parts of the Gulf are three to five degrees Fahrenheit higher than the average for the end of the 20th century. Research shows that human greenhouse gas emissions have caused the ocean to warm faster in recent years than at any point since the end of the last ice age. All this warm water is to hurricanes what gasoline is to a car engine, Tang said. A powerful storm takes energy from the ocean and converts it into roiling clouds and roaring winds.

As Ida developed, it traveled over the hottest parts of the gulf, sucking up energy to fuel its rapid growth. With no shifting upper atmosphere winds to disrupt it, the ring of thunderstorms around the hurricane's center — called the eyewall — started to churn faster and faster. Even worse, the sea surface temperature rose as the hurricane got closer to the coast. "That's really like stepping on the accelerator," Tang said. "Flooring it, basically."

Emanuel of MIT calls such rapid intensification a "canary in the mine" for climate change. Warmer conditions raise the "potential intensity" for storms — in other words, how bad they can get if nothing disrupts them. Climate change has also widened the disparity between the amount of heat in the ocean and the amount of moisture the atmosphere can hold, which accelerates the process of evaporation and energy transfer.

In a 2017 paper published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, Emanuel found that once-in-a-century intensification events — in which wind speeds accelerate about 70 miles per hour in just 24 hours — could happen every five to 10 years by 2100. Human-caused warming could lead to never-before-seen escalation of hurricanes, causing unheard-of surge in wind speeds of 100 miles per hour or more.

Climate change not only sets the stage for bigger, fiercer, faster storms, it also makes the deadliest aspect of hurricanes — a deluge of water — even more intense. For each degree Celsius that air heats up, it is able to hold 7 percent more moisture. This leads to exponentially heavier precipitation during storms.

7-Bill Spending Minibus Clears House

On Thursday, July 29, the House passed a \$600 billion package of seven spending bills, a step toward boosting civilian agency funding next year. The seven-bill "minibus" cleared the House by a 219-208 vote. Though Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.) and 17 other Democrats had urged a 3.2% raise in the FY 2022 appropriations bill, the minibus is silent on Federal pay for 2022, a tacit endorsement of President Biden's proposed 2.7% raise for civilian employees. The 2.7% number is not final until Biden sends a memorandum to Congress outlining his intentions for the pay raise. Assuming the President holds to his proposed 2.7%, it is unclear how locality pay adjustments will factor into the final number. The minibus includes \$300 million to electrify the Federal fleet, an administration priority, as well as \$50 million for the Technology Modernization Fund and \$18.8 million to stand up the new Office of the National Cyber Director. The House has now cleared nine of 12 appropriations bills, which fund the departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Interior, Labor, Transportation and Treasury, as well as the departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs. The minibus also includes funding for military construction activities, the Environmental Protection Agency and a variety of independent agencies. The House had previously passed two separate appropriations which fund the legislative branch and the State Department. The Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce and Justice bills are outstanding in the House. The process of funding the government for next year is incomplete. Senate appropriators haven't released their own spending drafts for next year, though the committee expected to begin that process in August. Congress must pass spending bills or some sort of short-term continuing resolution by September 30 to keep the government running.

Under the House minibus, the IRS would see a \$1.7 billion funding boost in 2022, with a significant portion going toward taxpayer services, enforcement and the agency's IT modernization needs. The spending package also includes \$42 million for the Office of Personnel Management over current levels and allows the agency to establish an IT working capital fund. OPM is recovering from the loss of its former security clearance business, which brought in nearly \$1 billion in revenue to the agency before the Defense Department took over the portfolio back in 2019. The Department of Veterans Affairs would get an additional \$8.7 billion in 2022 over current levels, which includes \$2.6 billion for the agency's electronic health record modernization.

In addition, the spending package provides more funding for EPA, USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in part to restore capacity and staffing at those agencies. It also includes \$3 billion in initial funding to set up a new research entity within the National Institutes of Health, known as the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, or ARPA-H, that will focus on "health breakthroughs" in cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's. It's less than half of what the president originally requested. The House minibus also removes a prohibition on abortion services in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program — a point of controversy for House Republicans during the appropriations process. Copy of article written by Paul Hudes, VP for Federal Legislation, Chapter 1888.

Legislation Introduced to Provide Seniors with Accurate COLAs

The Fair COLA for Seniors Act of 2021, H.R. 4315, introduced by Rep. John Garamendi, D-CA, would require the use of the Consumer Price Index for the

Elderly (CPI-E), which calculates inflation for Americans age 62 and older, to determine annual COLAs.

Currently, COLAs are determined by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). It does not accurately account for the purchasing habits of seniors, who tend to spend more than other groups on goods and services specific to their needs. For example, medical care costs for seniors are double those for the general population. Therefore, under the current formula, federal annuitants and all seniors lose a significant amount of their purchasing power.

Using the CPI-E to determine COLAs would increase them by an average 0.27 percent per year. Because this difference would compound, it results in significant increases in COLAs over time. Federal Retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), which does not provide Social Security Benefits, often rely solely on their federal annuity as their source of income. Therefore, a switch to the CPI-E would have a particularly positive impact on their retirement benefits.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR
Angela Hyman

Chapter Activity Report
8/1/2021-8/31/2021

- 464** Chapter 1747 Members as of 9/13/2021
- 05** New Chapter Members – Evelyn Richardson, William Patterson, William Kunkle, Josie Rodriguez, Warren King
- 01** Members Dropped for Non-Renewal
- 02** Members Passed – James Edwin Catterton, Honori J. Gaines
- 00** New Prospective Members
- 16** Members Renewed

TREASURERS REPORT Vanessa Washington	
Balance on: Jul 31, 2021	\$9,070.16
Income:	\$248.33
Expenses:	\$71.87
Balance on: Aug 31, 2021	\$9,246.62
Useable Balance on Aug 31, 2021	\$9,064.62
Reserve for Alzheimer's Fund	\$82.00
Reserve for Advertisement	\$100.00

CHAPTER 1747 OFFICERS

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