

MINUTES OF THE 55th NEW MEXICO
FEDERATION OF CHAPTERS CONVENTION
APRIL 19-21, 2018
TUCUMCARI, NEW MEXICO
by Mark Mickelsen

Thursday, April 19

The Federation Convention began on Thursday afternoon with registration and a Federation Executive Board Meeting. In the mid-afternoon there was a free guided tour of the nearby North American Wind Turbine and Research Center, guided by Tucumcari Chapter Vice President Wayne Clark.

In the evening at 6:00 pm there was a Welcome Reception with refreshments, cash bar, and piano music by Kevin Mueller. Everyone in attendance appeared to have a great time!

On the actual conference days there were representatives in the Conference Foyer from various FEHB Plans (Blue Cross, Aetna, and GEHA), as well as a table with historical information about Tucumcari and the Tucumcari NARFE Chapter. Several Federation Chapters also displayed their banners in the Convention room.

Friday, April 20

Introductions

The morning began with Door Prize drawings. Then Tom Anderson, President of the Tucumcari Chapter, opened the Convention at 8:00 am. Federation President Lorna Howerton presided and Solveiga Unger served as Parliamentarian for the Convention. Sharon Huffman of Tucumcari offered the Invocation. The Canon Air Force Base Cadet Color Guard posted the colors and we all said the Pledge of Allegiance. After that, Tucumcari Mayor Litchfield welcomed the NARFE participants, followed by remarks from Tom Anderson. President Howerton then called the Convention to order and recognized Federation Vice President for Advocacy (Legislation) Sharon Reese. Vice President Reese introduced the Congressional Staff guests, who then addressed us and read letters from their Senator/Congressman.

Senator Martin Heinrich's Staff

Mr. Dave Nezzi from the Santa Fe Office of Senator Martin Heinrich greeted us and stated that he was glad to attend the conference. He then read a letter from Senator Heinrich. In the letter, Sen. Heinrich expressed respect and support for NARFE and its concerns. He pledged to protect Federal employee and retiree benefits, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid from attacks on those earned benefits. Mr. Nezzi then gave his office number of (505) 988-6647 and invited NARFE members to contact him with any concerns.

Rep. Ben Ray Lujan's Staff

Mr. Ron Wilmont greeted us and told us that Rep. Lujan sends his best wishes for a successful conference. He then read a letter from Rep. Lujan in which he stated he would fight to keep Federal employee/retiree benefits strong and oppose all efforts to weaken them. Mr. Wilmont then invited anyone to contact him for any problems or concerns they may have.

Letter from Rep. Michelle Lujan-Grisham

Vice President Reese then read a letter from Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham. Rep. Lujan-Grisham pledged her support for maintaining strong Federal employee/retiree benefits.

Credentials Report and Determination of Quorum

Billie Zinter of the Credentials Committee reported that 33 delegates were registered as of this point in the Convention. Mark Mickelsen, Acting Secretary for the Convention, conducted the Roll Call of Chapters. The Roll Call showed that 11 of the 12 Federation Chapters were represented, which exceeded the threshold of 8 Chapters (2/3 of 12) to constitute a quorum to conduct business. Only the McKinley County Chapter 1380 was not represented. Therefore, a quorum was declared to be present. Finally, Acting Secretary Mark Mickelsen noted that the 2016 Federation Convention minutes had been approved by the Federation Executive Board on June 9, 2016, and copies of the minutes are available upon request.

Convention Business Presented and Approved

President Howerton moved that the 2018 Convention Agenda be approved. The assembled delegates then voted to approve the Agenda. Then the Convention Standing Rules were approved, followed by recognition of those who served on Convention Committees. Please see the separate file for those Convention Committees and their members.

Jessica Klement Presentation #1

Budget Process

At this point Vice President Reese introduced our Convention Keynote Speaker, the NARFE Staff VP for Advocacy Jessica Klement. Jessica outlined NARFE's successes and ongoing challenges in protecting our hard-earned Federal employee/retiree benefits. She noted that NARFE had largely been playing defense in the last 8 years in deflecting or defeating attacks on those benefits. As a result of NARFE's and its members' hard work, Federal retirees haven't lost anything during that time, which is a remarkable record of accomplishment. However, she cautioned that historically the time of greatest danger to our benefits is when there is agreement to increase Federal spending, and then the temptation in Congress is to turn to Federal employee/retiree benefits to provide some offsetting cuts ("Offsets"). Although Congress has currently entered into a 2-year budget agreement without Federal employee/retiree Offsets, there is still the potential to add to spending later this year or next year, such as if it should decide to enact a separate Infrastructure spending bill. Therefore, we must remain vigilant to prevent being used as Offsets. In addition, the Trump Administration's proposed FY 2019 Budget contains proposals for \$192 billion in specific cuts:

- Eliminating FERS COLAs for current and future retirees, and the FERS Annuity Supplement for future retirees;
- Decreasing CSRS COLAs by 0.5% per year;
- Increasing FERS employee retirement contributions by 6% over the next six years;
- Moving to a High-5 annuity formula from the current High-3;
- Reduce the rate of return on the TSP's G Fund to near zero;
- Enact a pay freeze for Federal employees in 2019; and,
- Reduce total paid leave by combining annual and sick leave into one leave account.

Again, although specific legislation by Congress to enact these proposed Administration cuts is unlikely in an election year like 2018, we must remain vigilant to prevent any such efforts. In addition, she's trying to lobby to get a Federal employee pay raise put back in the appropriations process this year in order to override the President's action to institute a pay freeze.

Advocacy efforts

Jessica talked about the importance of NARFE advocacy, starting with NARFE's efforts to stop or amend the Postal Reform Act as an example. NARFE opposes the bill in its current form because it requires some 76,000 Postal retirees to elect Medicare as a condition for continuing their FEHB health care benefits. If enacted, this would set a dangerous precedent of changing

Federal retiree benefits AFTER retirement; this could potentially be extended to all Federal retirees, not just Postal retirees.

She noted further that Advocacy efforts with legislators are critical. There is power in numbers who express themselves (e.g., silence = acceptance) and personal stories communicated to legislators and their staffs are very effective. We can use email; handwritten letters; direct phone calls; and even social media like Facebook and Twitter to make our views known. She stated that the Congressional District Liaison (CDL)/Senatorial Liaison (SL) structure NARFE recommends for all Federations is the best way to build sustained, effective relationships with lawmakers and their staffs. Fortunately, the New Mexico Federation has adopted this structure. She stressed that in dealing with lawmakers and staffs, we should build relationships over time, use meet-and-greet opportunities, and show respect to each staff member. She also noted that we should also consider strengthening our Advocacy efforts at the State level, especially since most congressional members and senators start out in state legislatures or state-wide elected offices.

NARFE-PAC and Q&As

Jessica promoted NARFE-PAC as one of the most effective means of influencing our legislators. Its purpose is to building relationships with them and to support candidates friendly to Federal employees/retirees and our issues. She stressed the importance of sustaining contributions (e.g, \$10-\$20 per month on your credit card) because NARFE can then count on having those funds available vs. a one-time contribution. She noted that NARFE-PAC is NOT:

- Partisan (e.g., it supports friendly candidates regardless of political party affiliation)
- Used in U.S. Presidential Campaigns
- Connected to other NARFE funds
- Using calendars, notepads, or other freebies sent out in regular NARFE letters.

Jessica's time in the questions and answers portion that followed touched on these topics:

- Medicare
- FEHB
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Civil Service Reform
- Political environment we're experiencing
- TSP changes.

Video from NARFE CEO Barbara Sido

We watched a video from NARFE CEO Barbara Sido. She talked about the present and future of NARFE, emphasizing our priority missions of Advocacy and serving as the “go-to” source for Federal employee/retiree issues and how the Federal Government works. She also emphasized plans for:

- New initiatives to correct misperceptions of the Federal workforce
- Strengthening NARFE-PAC, including emphasizing the need to increase the number of sustaining contributors
- New user-friendly Web pages
- Increased use of the Webinars as a recruitment tool
- Rolling out the “NARFE Next” Strategic Initiative as an innovative business model.

She concluded with an appeal to remain involved in NARFE’s efforts and encouraged attendance at the upcoming National Conference (“FEDCon 18”), as well as involvement in NARFE’s Centennial Celebration that will occur in 2021.

Video from NARFE President Richard Thissen

President Thissen noted that media coverage of our NARFE issues has greatly increased in the last two years. In addition, Jessica Klement was also frequently interviewed and was able to reach wide audiences with excellent information and insights. We currently have thousands of views of our Webinars, including from new and prospective members. Finally, we have reduced nationwide membership losses by 2/3 since 2016; we even recorded 13,000 new members starting in 2017, which represents a 30% increase, and we recorded a net membership GAIN in the first three months of 2018. This is progress!

Jessica Klement Presentation #2

Jessica presented the “NARFE Next” Initiative that looks to harness new technology and communication methods to improve NARFE’s customer service. She started by introducing the concept of a “Decision Tree” and passed out to the audience an example involving how a Federal retiree could decide whether to elect Medicare or not. This could be used for other challenging decisions in which people often don’t have sufficient information at first or wonder how to evaluate a great deal of information offered to them. NARFE has put these Decision Trees in electronic form to help NARFE members. She then noted that there is a cost to NARFE to create and market these tools, so she asked for audience suggestions on whether 1) these Decision Trees

are valuable; and if so, 2) how to best market them; and 3) how much (if anything) NARFE should charge for these tools. Audience members responded with their ideas.

She also stated that NARFE is developing a new NARFE App for cell phones, in addition to the Voter Voice App that is already available and connects the use to NARFE's National Website. NARFE is exploring how this new App could be connected directly to Voter Voice. She then asked for suggestions for the content of the App. Suggestions included:

- Advocacy
- Links to NARFE Webinars
- Links to local Service Officers
- Links to Chapters
- Appealing items for National-only members

She requested that at our Chapter meetings we mention the NARFE Next Initiative and ask chapter members for their suggestions. She also stated that NARFE is examining whether Podcasts we could listen to would be helpful to members. A lively discussion ensued about potential Podcast topics, including:

- Federal benefits updates
- Tammy Flanagan (Benefits Expert) presentations
- Managing your money
- Safeguarding your health
- Policy matters/issues
- Informed citizenry (political environment)
- Answering questions
- A deeper dive into NARFE Magazine articles.

The Convention then broke for lunch.

Friday Afternoon Convention Certifications

President Howerton recognized the Affinity Partner Sponsorships for the Convention. Acting Secretary Mark Mickelsen again conducted the Roll Call of Chapters. 11 of the 12 Federations (all except McKinley County) were represented and therefore the presence of a quorum was declared. Billie Zinter of the Credentials Committee again reported that 33 registered delegates were present.

Resolutions Committee

Lee Tomlin of the Resolutions Committee reported that no proposed Resolutions had been received by the Committee during the period for receiving them prior to the Convention.

Presentation on Bylaws Revision

President Howerton presented the background for the proposed Revised Bylaws, along with an explanation of why the revisions were necessary. This was because of the National Convention's passage of the One Member-One Vote and Optional Chapter Membership resolutions at the 2016 National Convention. It was noted that when Optional Chapter Membership was adopted, the state E-NARFE Chapter was also abolished. In addition, with One Member-One Vote, future meetings will be called "Conferences" rather than "Conventions." As President Howerton moderated the discussion, several aspects were then discussed by the audience, including:

- Chapters who choose not to affiliate with the Federation (they will not have financial or voting rights in the Federation and won't be recognized by the Federation)
- The need to conform to National's Bylaws, or we would lose our Federation Charter
- The ability of the new 2018 Federation Executive Board that will be elected later today to make minor (e.g., grammatical) changes later if needed.

After this discussion, as the Revised Bylaws were still in Committee, Marlene Mayfield of the Bylaws Committee moved to place the following statement above the Signature Block: "These New Mexico Federation Bylaws, adopted on April 20, 2018 in Tucumcari, New Mexico, supersede any and all Constitution and/or Bylaws previously adopted by the New Mexico Federation." The motion was approved. Then Marlene, on behalf of the Bylaws Committee, moved that the Revised Bylaws, as amended, be adopted. The motion was seconded to approve the proposed Revised Bylaws. A 2/3 vote of the delegates in favor was required to adopt them. The vote taken was 32 delegates in favor, 1 against. Therefore, the Revised Bylaws were adopted.

Presentation on Standing Rules

The proposed Standing Rules for the Convention were then presented and discussed. It was noted that in contrast to the Bylaws, only a simple majority vote would be needed to adopt the Standing Rules. Lee Tomlin recommended adding "as defined by the National Bylaws" to Section 1E of the Standing Rules. This suggestion was voted on and adopted unanimously. Tom Anderson asked why the phrase "National Only Members" was included in Section 1C. Lorna explained that they are still a National Membership Category of their own. We'll seek

clarification from National on this wording and will remove it later if needed. No one objected to this explanation and the discussion moved on. Tom then also asked if we could change the wording in Section 2 titled “Membership Recruitment” because it dealt with the right of each member to belong to either National-Only membership or to a Chapter; therefore, it also dealt with existing members, not just recruitment of new members. In the ensuing discussion the audience agreed, and a consensus developed to change the Section’s Title to “Membership Choice.” This was voted on and adopted unanimously. After these minor changes were approved, the delegates voted on the Standing Rules and adopted them unanimously (e.g., 33 in favor, 0 against).

Election of New Federation Executive Board Officers

Bill Britton, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, was recognized for the Nominating Committee Report, followed by President Howerton’s presentation of the Committee’s nominated candidates for the five positions: Federation President; Executive Vice President for Membership; Vice President for Advocacy; Secretary; and Treasurer. Three of the five positions had one nominated candidate as approved by the Committee during the nomination period starting in January prior to the Convention, as follows:

President: Sharon Reese of Las Cruces. President Howerton presented Sharon’s name to the delegates, and then Lorna asked if there were any additional nominations for President from the floor. No floor nominations occurred, so Sharon was elected by acclamation.

Executive Vice President for Membership: The Nominating Committee had received no nominations, and when President Howerton asked about any additional nominations from the floor, none were presented. Therefore, no vote was taken on this office; however, it was noted that there may be someone interested in this office and if they expressed their interest and met the qualifications, the newly elected Board could appoint someone to this office.

Vice President for Advocacy: Mark Mickelsen of Rio Rancho. President Howerton presented Mark’s name to the delegates, and then she asked if there were any additional nominations for Vice President for Advocacy from the floor. No floor nominations occurred, so Mark was elected by acclamation.

Secretary: Marlene Mayfield of Las Cruces. President Howerton presented Marlene’s name to the delegates, and then President Howerton asked if there were any additional nominations for Secretary from the floor. No floor nominations occurred, so Marlene was elected by acclamation.

Treasurer: The Nominating Committee had received no nominations. However, when President Howerton asked about any additional nominations from the floor, Lee Tomlin of Albuquerque was nominated by John Reese of Las Cruces. Lee expressed his desire to serve in this position. Lee currently serves as the Albuquerque Chapter Treasurer. He was elected by acclamation.

In summary, the following were elected to the newly elected Federation Executive Board for a one-year term:

- President—Sharon Reese
- Executive VP for Membership—To be determined
- VP for Advocacy—Mark Mickelsen
- Secretary—Marlene Mayfield
- Treasurer—Lee Tomlin

The terms of office will be only one year instead of two years. This is because we will have the next Federation Conference at the same time as the next Region VII Conference which the New Mexico Federation will host in 2019, rather than having the next Federation Conference in 2020 as we normally would.

Memorial Service

At the Memorial Service, the four outgoing District Vice Presidents (Billie Zinter, Mark Mickelsen, Carol Main substituting for Sharon Willoughby, and Dennis Clark) read the names of those NARFE members from their Districts who passed away since the last Federation Convention in 2016, and candles were lit in their honor. It was a solemn, dignified, and fitting tribute to those whom we greatly miss.

Region VII Vice President's Report

President Howerton read the report of our Region VII Vice President, Rodney Adelman, as he was unable to attend the Convention for health reasons. Please see the separate file for Vice President Adelman's report on the Federation Website.

Closing items for Friday afternoon

President Howerton acknowledged the outgoing Federation Executive Board's individual reports detailing their efforts since the last Federation Convention in 2016, and these were included in the Convention Booklet given to each participant. Tom Anderson then thanked the four outgoing District Vice Presidents for their work.

Vice President Reese urged each Chapter to follow the lead of the Las Cruces Chapter in studying the proposed Resolutions that will be voted on by the entire nationwide NARFE membership in May and June prior to the National Conference in Jacksonville, Florida in August. On-line voting will be available starting May 10, and paper ballots will be in the June issue of NARFE Magazine for mailing. Acting Secretary Mickelsen noted that members should spread the word that all votes must be cast by June 30, in order to be valid.

Friday Night Banquet

Starting at 6:30 pm, participants and guests who had registered for the banquet were treated to a delicious steak, chicken, or vegetarian dinner. The bluegrass/country quartet “Tucumcari Crossroads” presented outstanding musical entertainment featuring many charming numbers, including some patriotic selections. The Tucumcari Chapter had created beautiful table decorations, which they allowed guests to take home if they wished. President Howerton installed the newly elected Federation Board in place of Region VII VP Rodney Adelman. President Howerton also presented outgoing NW District Vice President Billie Zinter with the Tony Genta Award for Dedicated and Meritorious Service to NARFE (she is moving out of state later this year).

Saturday, April 21

Final Credentials Report

Billie Zinter of the Credentials Committee reported that 2 more delegates had registered, bringing the total delegate count to 35. 11 of the 12 Chapters were still represented (all except McKinley County).

Treasurer’s Report

Outgoing Federation Treasurer Patty Bachtel presented her Treasurer’s Report. Please see the separate file for her report on the Federation Website.

FEEA Report

Vice President Sharon Reese, head of FEEA for both Region VII and the New Mexico Federation, presented the FEEA Report. She reported that she obtains a quarterly report on FEEA contributions; in the latest report, only \$30 had been collected, all of it from contributors in Colorado. She encouraged the audience to contribute, noting that the funds go towards disaster relief and student scholarships. It was reported that so far in the Federation Convention,

\$67 had been collected for FEEA from selling the FEEA raffle tickets. At the conclusion of her report, the FEEA raffle drawing was held.

NARFE-PAC Report

Linda Clark, head of NARFE-PAC for the Federation, delivered the NARFE-PAC report. She reported that of the \$1.1 million collected nationwide thus far this year, about half had been disbursed to political candidates supportive of NARFE, including Sen. Martin Heinrich and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan here in New Mexico. In New Mexico, 175 members had contributed some \$10,000, and about \$145 had been collected here at the Federation Convention. The Federation has 15 sustaining contributors. At this point, the remaining raffles were held, and the remaining items were distributed to the winners.

Remaining Business

Lee Tomlin brought up the topic of the upcoming National Executive Board election and a discussion ensued in which members expressed their opinions and referred those interested to the candidate statements on the NARFE website. President Howerton encouraged everyone to inform themselves and to vote. She then thanked everyone involved in planning for the Convention, especially the Tucumcari Chapter. Tom Anderson then asked the Tucumcari Convention Committee to stand, in order to be recognized and thanked. He also thanked President Howerton for her service as Federation President during the last two years and presented her with a card signed by those in attendance at the Convention and a gift of a wristwatch. She thanked him and expressed her gratitude for the help she had received as President. She noted that about ½ of our New Mexico membership is non-chapter (e.g., National Only), so we need to find ways to get them involved, especially in advocacy. President Howerton then called on newly elected Federation President Sharon Reese to come forward and presented her with the President's Gavel.

Sharon Reese's remarks as new Federation President

President Reese expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Federation President. She stated that the new Federation Executive Board will look to the example of the Las Cruces Chapter in devising how we will be able to vote under the new One Member-One Vote System. Communication is vital; she appealed to the Chapter Officers to let the Board know what their needs are now that there are no more District VPs to act as liaisons between the Board and the Chapters.

President Reese noted that now that she has been elected Federation President, she will give up her FEEA positions. The National Committee Assignments she has will end automatically on

Oct. 31, 2018; the new National President will make new assignments at that time. She invited people to contact her directly if needed at the following contact information: Tel. (575) 649-6035 (Cell), or on her email at sreese346@gmail.com.

After Sharon Huffman of Tucumcari offered the Benediction, the Convention was formally adjourned at 9:40 am. The new Federation Executive Board held its first organizational meeting in a room at the Convention Center after the Convention adjourned.

Thank you again to all those who planned and organized the Convention, those who made presentations, and to all the attendees for coming!