



Issue 2008-3

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NARFE

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

Protecting the Future for Retired and Current Federal Employees

New Mexico Federation

Voices

Fall 2008



National Web Site: www.narfe.org

Federation: <http://www.narfe-nm.net>

President's Message

Mary Ellen McKay

At the 2008 NARFE National Convention held in early September, I had the opportunity to attend the NARFE Federation Presidents' Meeting. There were 53 Federation Presidents in attendance. The goal of the meeting was to brainstorm and discuss items that should improve the effectiveness of the NARFE organization in the 21st century. The meeting opened with presentations from NARFE leaders who have had success in recruiting and retaining members. Ideas covered included "Lunch and Learn" sessions, pre-retirement seminars, and other ideas generated by the participants. I have shared the ideas generated in the break-out groups with Sharon Willoughby, Executive Vice President of the Federation, and she will be sharing these ideas as she works with the Chapters on membership.

The presidents at this meeting made three notable recommendations. 1) Increase the public relations budget by \$500,000.00/year so Federations can advertise in local publications and media of their choice. 2) Revert to a paper version of the F-7. (Soundly rejected by the National Executive Board. The F-7 online reduces errors; using a paper version is a backward step in our effort to work with electronic technology in the 21st century.) 3) Fund the Leadership Development Committee so they can act and train officers and chapter leaders.

I found the meeting very interesting and met many nice presidents from other Federations.

At the present time, I have met with four Chapters and attended one District Workshop. I have plans for attending three Chapters in November and January. Please let me know when I can visit your Chapter.

At the next meeting of your Chapter, please ensure that your Chapter has a current copy of the F-10 publication, "Chapter and Federation Officers Manual." The manual was updated in August 2008, and has a wealth of information that can be very *(continued on page 5)*

Secretary's Report

Gloria Delgado

As we come to the end of the year and the holiday season is upon us, it is time to reflect on and be thankful for the countless blessings and good times we have shared with family and friends. The NARFE New Mexico Federation of Chapters board members wish each and every one of you the best in 2009.

We must also with sadness take time to reflect on family and friends we may have lost this past year. In August, New Mexico lost a dear friend and NARFE member, Maxine Simmons. Maxine was known as the "Fountain of Knowledge" when it came to NARFE matters. At the time of her death, she was President of the Belen Chapter. Throughout her NARFE career, she served in various officer capacities at both Chapter and Federation levels, and received many awards and recognition. She was also Editor of this newsletter for several years. On October 14, the Belen Chapter along with the NW District Vice President, held a Memorial Service in her honor. Maxine will be greatly missed throughout our New Mexico Chapters.

During this past year, Federation Officers continued to focus on ensuring that New Mexico Chapters were kept informed on issues of concern and interest to all of our members. President McKay and the District Vice Presidents, visited Chapters throughout the state and provided help and solutions to their issues and problems. The Membership Vice President was focused on recruiting and retaining of members by visiting Chapters and encouraging members in their efforts to increase membership rolls. With current economic problems, it is important that NARFE keep its membership rolls strong in order to protect our benefits which may be threatened, not only during this crisis, but also in the future.

As the New Year approaches, it is time to think ahead to the annual New Mexico Federation Convention held every April. The 2009 convention *(continued on page 2)*

Executive Vice President
Sharon Willoughby

At the National Convention, a resolution was passed that discontinues the Honorary Life Memberships. Existing Honorary Life Members are grandfathered and will not be required to pay National dues. The committee resolution also established a new category called "Distinguished Member" – a member who reaches 85 years of age and has 20 years in NARFE. Distinguished Members will continue to pay NARFE dues and will receive a Distinguished Member pin and ID card. This was amended on the floor to allow those who are current Honorary Life Members to "upgrade" to Distinguished Members by resuming the payment to NARFE dues. However, current Life Members will not be required to resume payment of the National Dues when they become Distinguished Members. Individual Chapters will determine whether to assess local Chapter dues. From those who are grandfathered, and the Federation will count them as dues paying members for per capita dues (\$1.75).

FEHBP Open Season is in full swing. Please be sure to remind each Federal Employee and Retiree that NARFE acts as their "Insurance Policy" against reductions in their retirement annuities, COLAs, health-care protection, and for FERS members, matching TSP funds. Federal health care and retirement benefits are always vulnerable, particularly with a budget deficit.

Moreover, in the not to distant future, lawmakers may want to cut federal retirement or benefits in response to the tremendous pressure placed on the budget by 77 million retiring baby boomers, the mortgage industry bailout, military expenses, etc.

A strong membership means enhanced influence with Congress. Our safety is in numbers. You have to get your membership behind you. Get spouses, friends, and the person who took your place at work as well as his or her work mates to join NARFE forces in this coming battle.

I'm sure you have received your M112 by now. If you haven't, let me know, and I will make sure you receive it. Please go over every name for accuracy in address, area codes, phone numbers, and email addresses. If your members have not provided their email address to NARFE, please encourage them to do so to get on GEMS. GEMS will be our front line of defense in the coming "Perfect Storm". We will be notified through GEMS of these important issues, and we will have to act quickly to send our letters and make our calls to our Congressional Representatives and Senators. I can't stress this enough, the fight is coming, and we have to be ready.

Legislative News
Bill Gomez

By the time you read this, the general elections will probably be over, and we will be wondering how we can work with the new President and the new Congress. New Mexico will be in a unique position, as we will have three new Congressmen and a new Senator representing the state. The loss of Senator Domenici will be a loss to the political power of the state. Senator Domenici had a great deal of seniority, and was able to represent us very well for many years in various congressional positions.

The October issue of NARFE magazine includes an article about congressional voting records on NARFE issues. The record of the NM delegation is (% pro NARFE issues): Senator Bingaman – 80%, Senator Domenici – 49%, Congressman Udall – 100%, Congressman Pearce – 40%, and Congresswoman Wilson – 35%.

Mark Your Calendars: Our New Mexico State Legislative Day is on January 28, 2009. We will have a breakfast for NARFE members after which we will be visiting our New Mexico State Legislators. The NARFE NM Federation of Chapters executive board meeting is on the morning of the 29th, 8 a.m. to 12 noon. Everyone is invited to attend these activities. Information about hotels and meeting locations will be distributed via email.

Mark Your Calendars: The 2009 NARFE Legislative Training Conference will be in Washington D.C., March 7 – 10. The goals include educating members about the NARFE legislative agenda and developing dedicated advocates for our legislative priorities. All NARFE members, especially legislative leaders at the chapter level, are encouraged to attend this biennial conference. For information about the training conference agendas, registration fees, and hotels, consult the NARFE magazine and the NARFE website, www.narfe.org.
(continued on page 5)

Secretary's Report (continued from page 1)

Convention is scheduled to take place on April 16, 17, and 18 in Albuquerque at the Sandia Courtyard Hotel and Convention Center located on Hotel Avenue and Eubank NE. Albuquerque Chapter 80 will host the Convention, and they are happy to report that preparations are well underway. President McKay has visited the convention site and found the hotel and meeting rooms satisfactory. We encourage all of our members throughout New Mexico to mark their calendars for April 16, 17, and 18. It is only through your attendance that the 2009 Convention can be a complete success.

Southwest District, *Roy Willoughby*

Silver City Chapter 481 will host the 2008 /2009 Southwest District Workshop on Friday, November 7, 2008 under the leadership of Lou Pruitt. This is a particularly special workshop because this will be Martha Leiker's first official visit as our new Region VII Vice President. In addition, there will be a stellar cast for this very informative leadership workshop. The presentations will include Russ Boor, Past Region VII Vice President; Mary Ellen McKay, New Mexico Federation President; Sharon Willoughby, New Mexico Federation Executive VP/Membership; Bill Gomez, New Mexico Federation VP/Legislation; Jim Kielty, Las Cruces Chapter 182 Service team member; and I as moderator.

Sharon and I have visited the Southwest chapters as a team to inform each chapter about important NARFE issues such as the approaching "Perfect Storm" and how to prepare for it. We encouraged Chapter members to keep up with developing National and State legislation issues that might impact them personally and their chapters. We stressed the importance of membership recruitment and retention to ensure a strong and effective chapter. We also had open discussions on areas of interest to the Chapters with an emphasis on getting members involved in Chapter committees. Socorro Chapter 1402, under its leadership of the new president, Naomi Castaneda, is doing wonderfully, and their attendance for our visit was outstanding. Truth or Consequences (T or C) Chapter 1341, under its leadership of the new president, Ken Johnson, was equally impressive. We are encouraged with the enthusiasm of the membership in each of the chapters we have visited, and are looking forward to the Silver City workshop. We will visit Luna County/Deming Chapter 1299 in January 2009. And of course, we are continuously updating our own Las Cruces Chapter 182, as it is our home base.

Southeast District, *Thomas J. Anderson*

How to get new members get involved

There are twenty-one NARFE Chapters in New Mexico. Thirteen have more than 50 members, and the largest is Albuquerque Chapter 80 with 919 members. The largest in the SE District is Alamogordo Chapter 698 with about 250 members.

The main purpose of a chapter is to review and discuss changing benefit issues, not to be a social club. Nevertheless, it is still important that members be acquainted with each other and especially with the president and other officers. All chapters should have membership chairpersons that personally welcome new members. Most chapters introduce and have the new member tell about themselves at their first meeting. Even so, this alone will not make them acquainted with the President or chapter members. *(continued next column)* ↗

Southeast District, (continued)

Both the new member and its President have a responsibility to get acquainted. By doing so, a foundation can be laid that will determine the future participation of the new member. A number of questions should be asked: are you new to the chapter area; are you new to the state; where do you live (physically); are you married; is your spouse a federal employee or retiree; is your spouse a member; what was your position while employed; were you a supervisor or trainer; etc.?

Documenting member information will prove invaluable when it is time to select nominees for office. Finding candidates willing and able to serve is an issue that gives nearly all chapters a tough time each year.

When is the best time to begin guiding someone to take an office, be it Chapter, Federation, Region, and even National level? The best answer is, of course, now! Second best would be to do it at least four months prior to election. All Chapters know it is, at best, difficult to find a willing candidate. Nevertheless, we also know that, without officers, chapters cannot survive. The process of closing a chapter, as directed by national by-laws, is not easy and usually results in the loss of many members. Most chapter by-laws state that officers hold office until replaced. So, it is very important that current officers, as well as all members, strive to have people ready to step up to the plate at election time. The chapter should see that officers are replaced every two or three years to maintain member interest.

I wish all chapters good luck with that in the next few months, and happy and health holidays.

Northwest District, *Madeline Jennings*

The NW district continues with new fall activities. Please remember to work on helping with health fairs in our area. We need to gather any new members that we can get into the fold.

- ABQ Chapter 80 is really on the go planning for the April 2009 NM Federation of Chapters annual convention. Check out their newsletters for on-going convention updates, www.narfe-nm.net/ch0080/ch0080.html
- Farmington Chapter 1179 has started its chapter meetings, and we hope for better attendance.
- Gallup Chapter 1380 is back into the swing of things for the winter. Our attendance has been good for our group, so I am really pleased.
- Belen Chapter 1462 hosted the NW District meeting on October 14. We had a great meeting, beginning with a Memorial Service honoring the late Maxine Simmons. She was a true inspiration to all NARFE members. We should be proud to be members of NM NARFE and to be able to follow in her footsteps. *(continued on page 4)*

Northwest District (continued)

Although her shoes will be hard to fill, we all need to remember that she set a high example for all of us to follow. We have to remember to work together, keep up with deadlines, and share information regarding pending issues that surface regarding things that threaten our benefits. The Belen Chapter Newsletter is very good. You should check out the October issue for a summary of our NW District Meeting, including lots of great photos! www.narfe-nm.net/ch1462/ch1462.html

Northwest District, *Jim Bjurman*

To paraphrase Garrison Keillor, it has been a quiet summer in the Northeast District. Four of the six chapters were on summer break, only Chapters Santa Fe (186) and Duke City (1411) held meetings. With the onset of autumn, all chapters swung back into action. In September, I was able to visit the Las Vegas (886) chapter. This is a small chapter, but has a dedicated core group of members. Like all chapters, they face the same challenges: recruiting new members, encouraging current members to become more active, and developing succession plans for current chapter officers.

The Rio Rancho (1381) chapter, spent the summer searching for a new meeting place. At their last meeting in June, they were told that they no longer could use the restaurant they had been using for meetings. Several members searched for alternatives and identified several possible sites. A vote was held by email and at a summer picnic. As a result, the chapter is meeting at an oriental buffet that recently opened in northwest Albuquerque.

The remainder of my chapter visits should be completed early next year. Planning continues for a district workshop. The planning has been complicated due to the general election this year. Many of the members are actively involved in the various political campaigns and have asked that any plans take that into account.

In closing, on a personal note, I was able to spend most of the summer away from New Mexico, with most of the time being in Poland. There, my wife Janine and I, had the opportunity to teach English to high school students from the eastern part of the country. We gained much from this trip, but one thing that stood out, was the interest, appreciation, and respect all the children had for the United States. Needless to say, it was a gratifying experience for my wife and me.



***Veterans' Day
November 11th***

Take time to remember and honor our veterans!

A Perfect Storm Brewing For 2009?

Russ Boor, Past Region VII Vice President

Consider the following contributing factors:

- \$ Economy in the basement, stock market falls, credit crisis looms and housing foreclosures continue
- \$ Nation in recession
- \$ Inflation on the rise (6% in last 12 months)
- \$ Unemployment rate continues to increase
- \$ Energy crisis increasing
- \$ General decrease nationwide in retirement and health benefits for workers
- \$ Tidal wave of baby boomers entering retirement - 77 million by 2017
- \$ People are living longer - 1 in 5 will be age 65 or older by 2010
- \$ Medicare projected to be insolvent by 2019
- \$ Health care issues and reform are popular with the people
- \$ Large turnover in Members of Congress
- \$ First year of a first term for a new President - The so called "honeymoon" period
- \$ President & Members of Congress like to take unpopular steps first year of first term - pain becomes distant memory.
- \$ Federal retirees & Social Security recipients scheduled to receive a 5.8% raise in January - puts a target on our back
- \$ Entitlement changes probably will be seen as being a key to reform - Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Civil Service Retirement and Disability Program, Federal Employees Health Benefit Program and Veterans health care

Recent Government Actions:

- \$ Huge budget deficit, \$455 billion so far this year plus additional cost to bailout banks and large corporations
- \$ \$700 billion bailout of major financial investment banks coupled with a proposed \$110 billion in emergency tax relief
- \$ At the request of OPM, FEHBP providers have expanded Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) and High Deductible Health Plans (HDHPs).
- \$ OPM continues to NOT seek subsidy for providing drug coverage to Medicare eligible annuitants
- \$ Supreme Court allows employers to reduce or eliminate retiree health benefits based on age and companies are increasingly taking advantage of this decision

Comment: Federal retirement is not part of the problem, but it could become part of the solution. It might be viewed as being the low hanging apple on the tree - ready and easy to pick.

Upon reviewing all the above factors and recent government actions, one might *(continued on page 5)*

President's Message (continued from page 1)

helpful to the management of your Chapter. For example, the manual tells how long various records must be kept by the Chapter. Gee, wouldn't it be great to know that you can throw away some of that stuff? The manual contains information on all aspects of Chapter management. I recommend it very highly.

The reason I want to visit your Chapter is so we can get to know each other, and I can assure you of how strongly I feel that Chapters are the grassroots and backbone of NARFE. We have to work together to ensure the preservation of our earned benefits.

The Federation Convention will be in Albuquerque on April 16, 17 and 18, 2009. It is important for as many members as possible to attend. I will try to keep the meeting relevant, fast moving and enjoyable.

Please call or e-mail me if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions that will help the Federation and Chapters.

A Perfect Storm (continued)

conclude there is a "Perfect Storm" approaching and we need to keep a close watch on what legislation, directives, and regulations the President, Congress and OPM might propose for this coming year. We must organize now and be ready to quickly act to protect our earned annuities, benefits and health care.

What Can We Do?

Dan Adcock, NARFE's Legislative Director, in his recent address to the National Convention recommended Chapters and Federations begin organizing and making preparations now to defend members' entitlements and benefits by:

- \$ Keeping our members informed on status of adverse legislation and what they can do to help.
- \$ Assembling telephone trees and calling committees so that rank and file members can be contacted within 48 hours to make calls to their Members of Congress.
- \$ Convincing members to provide their email addresses to NARFE. Only 42,000, (one fifth) of our members can now be contacted thru NARFE's GEMS email notification system. To do so, send an e-mail to memsrvcs@narfe.org listing your NARFE ID number, name and email address.
- \$ Redoubling efforts to recruit and retain members
- \$ Becoming involved in political campaigns
- \$ Donating to NARFE-PAC
- \$ Remembering "All politics are local"

Treasurer's Report – FY 2007
(01 May 2008 – 30 September 2008)
Rick DeMello

Beginning Balance		\$11,581.06
Income		\$3,449.54
Interest	\$24.99	
Council On Aging	\$200.00	
10% Monies	\$3,224.55	
Expenses		(\$3,080.48)
Officer Vouchers	\$2,799.40	
Checks	\$12.40	
Gift for Russ Boor	\$31.29	
Add for Nat'l Convention	\$55.00	
Insurance	\$75.00	
Newsletter	\$119.89	
District V.P. Awards	(\$12.50)	
Balance		\$11,950.12

Legislative News (continued from page 2)

Recently I had the opportunity to volunteer some of my time to show two Congresswomen from California around the Mesilla Valley. They were here to support a local candidate for Congress. The important thing about this visit was the fact that the Congresswomen knew about NARFE; their roots are in New Mexico; and they both started their careers by running for municipal offices, then ran for the California Assembly, and then for Congress. There is a lesson to be learned from them: any of us could be doing the same thing. There are members of the New Mexico Legislature and the U.S. Congress who are NARFE members. We need to seek out good candidates and support them, so they know our story.

NARFE Headlines

- Next Year's COLA Highest Since 1982
- NARFE Troubled by FEHBP Premium and Drug Copay Hike, but Pleased with New Hearing Aid Benefit and Decision to Drop Separate Retiree Plan
- OPM has announced the premium rates for FEHBP plans for the coming 2009 year.

Check out these stories and more at www.narfe.org

**National Active and Retired
Federal Employees Association (NARFE)
New Mexico Federation of Chapters
Voices**

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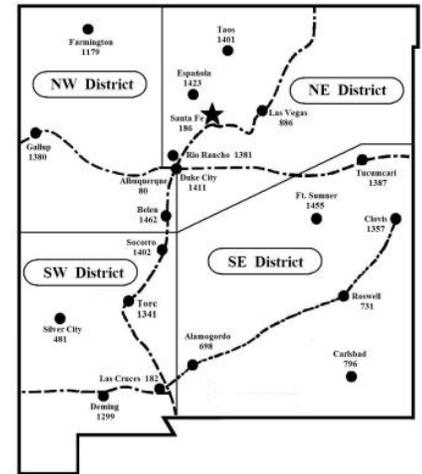
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and
NARFE Needs You!

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48th Annual Convention
April 16 – 18, 2009
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

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