

SOUTHWEST FEDERATION NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

President's Message

By Mark Mickelsen, SW Federation President

Welcome to the first issue of our Southwest Federation Newsletter! We hope these Newsletters will improve our communication within the Federation and give each of us the information we need to bring NARFE's work forward. Future issues will be coming!

Here are some important items from the Federation for you!

--The Federation is providing a blanket reimbursement of \$900 to up to 33 Southwest Federation members to attend our 2026 NARFE National Conference ("Fedcon 26") at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Indianapolis from August 23-25, 2026. Early bird online registration closes on May 22, after which the registration cost increases. Check the narfe.org website for further information and to register. If you are a Chapter member or would like to join a Chapter, your Chapter may provide additional reimbursement of the registration cost and other costs. Come join us in August to hear from great speakers and learn more about how to make NARFE more effective. If you are interested in attending, please email me at mmickelsen@aol.com to be added to the list for the Federation reimbursement. We currently have approximately 15 members on the list.

--On Saturday, May 16, the Federation will host a free one-hour Federation Webinar on Zoom, starting at 11:00 am New Mexico Time/10:00 am Arizona time. I will be the presenter. The topic is: "How our retirement benefits are funded, and why proposed benefit cuts generally don't actually save money." This information is critical for us to speak out against proposed cuts. Whether you are a current Federal Employee or Retiree, are under FERS or CSRS, get armed with the facts to preserve our earned benefits! To attend, please email our Federation VP Marlene Seaton at: bugszie@aol.com so she can email you the Zoom link just prior to the Zoom

--Our Federation is exploring opportunities to partner with NARFE's contractor Street Level Studio in recruiting new members here in Arizona and New Mexico, including at annual Health Fairs. We will keep you posted on developments. All of us can also promote NARFE on our social media accounts and among other Federal Employees and Retirees. Let's get the word out!

--We encourage everyone to get on the narfe.org website and join the Southwest Federation Community on FedHub. It's the ideal place to get information updates on NARFE and discuss NARFE issues with other Federation members. We also have great Facebook pages to visit: the NARFE Southwest Federation Page and the Northern New Mexico Friends of NARFE Page.

Thank you for what you do for NARFE. Let's keep moving forward!

MEMBERSHIP: A subject we have LONG been discussing

By Marlene Seaton, SW Federation Vice President and Membership Chair

Those of us who have been members for a long time have heard a lot about membership over the years. It has long been focused on chapters and we have always felt that the health fairs were a focus of our efforts. Well things are changing but still staying the same.

First our membership focus has always been on the Chapters and the Health Fairs around where those Chapters are located. Well our chapters are reducing and memberships in the chapters are also reducing making membership recruitment difficult. In addition, one of the main recruitment efforts has always been placed in the Health Fairs.

Second, we also have to face the fact that more of our membership are at large members (National only members) and do not attend chapter meetings. If we are going to effectively attend Health Fairs, we need help from the at large membership, so we must figure out how we can leverage that membership to help us.

We are engaged with National on how we solve these problems and they have contracted with a group called STREET LEVEL STUDIOS. Federation Pres. Mark Mickelsen and I are working with STREET LEVEL STUDIOS to see what we can do to maintain and grow our membership.

They have confirmed that many of our gut efforts on membership are important such as individual recruitment and attending the Health Fairs. However they have also added some ideas to help us recruit more.

First, we need to engage not only our chapter members in recruitment we must also work with our at large membership to recruit.

Second, we need to look at new ideas such as engaging highly committed/motivated members who recruit, and how we can get to the active and retired federal employees so that they know about our organization and want to join, and including meeting with them after work for coffee, or during lunch.

Third, we also need to make sure where we are looking for these people in the right places and make sure we know where to communicate with them. Already we have some suggestions from STREET LEVEL STUDIOS. Below are some things we are discussing:

1. We need to start communicating with these people on social media like Facebook, Instagram, X, Tik Tok, & LinkedIn. STREET LEVEL STUDIOS will help us with ads & how we

can approach people who communicate on social media. We have to remember more and more people are using social media to communicate.

2. We need to embrace and expand our participation in Heath fairs, with the chapters and also with the help of the at large members. Having them help us will mean more person power and we need that. This year we already had one at large member volunteer to help us here in Arizona.
3. We need to engage in some new activities. Encouraging highly committed and motivated members to help us in the chapter and in the state. Organize coffee or ZOOM meetings in which we engage with members and other federal employees whom we would like to be members. Mark is going to test the waters here in May with a Zoom meeting.
4. In short, I wanted you to know we need your help. Some things will remain the same for recruitment so keep at it, but we are looking at new methods of recruitment and communication with STREET LEVEL STUDIOS help.

Please stay tuned and think of new ways we can recruit and communicate, and be ready to help us with Ideas that STREET LEVEL STUDIOS comes up with. Your Federation Board is all ears about your input and ideas.

In preparation for that, we would like you to go to the following website, at NARFE.org. www.narfe.org, log in as a member, then search for membership recruitment. There you will find some ideas that individuals and chapters can use to spread the word to recruit new members. Let us know if you find them not useful, feel you can adapt them to fit your area, or find them to be ideas you would really like to try. Without your help and input we cannot do this. We look forward to hearing what you think about the ideas and resources provided at that website.

Legislative Update

By Kay Snowfleet, Santa Fe Chapter Legislative VP

Below you will find a brief summary of some of the legislation that affects feds. The NARFE magazine provides a more extensive overview, but the information is often out of date by the time we receive the magazine. The NARFE website has more updated information and also provides you with tools to contact your representatives about the pending legislation; you can also sign up for their newsletter. You may also wish to subscribe to the email newsletters from Government Executive and FedWeek; both offer free newsletters which provide up to date information. Here are the website addresses:

NARFE.com

Govexec.com

FEDweek.com

A Brief Summary of Some of the Currently Pending Legislation

The administration implemented the Schedule P/C Rule (formerly known as Schedule F) effective March 8, 2026. Schedule P/C eliminates merit-based civil protections from more than 50,000 federal employees. The Saving the Civil Service Act would prevent the implementation of Schedule P/C: House bill H.R. 492 and Senate bill S.134. Encourage your Representative and Senators. The Advocacy page on the NARFE website makes it easy to send an email to all three at once, or you can call their offices.

NARFE endorses the FAIR Act, H.R. 7480/S. 3823, to increase federal pay rates by 4.1% in 2027.

Many federal employees began their tenure with the federal government as temporary employees before transitioning to a permanent role. Currently, temporary work is ineligible for credit toward the FERS plan which can prolong a federal employee's retirement timeline. NARFE supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act, H.R.1522. This legislation would expand employment eligibility under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) to include temporary federal employment after December 31, 1988.

NARFE supports the Help Federal Employees During Shutdowns (Help FEDS) Act H.R. 5572/S. 2948. This legislation would expand Unemployment Insurance eligibility to excepted federal government employees who must work without pay during a shutdown.

NARFE also supports the Equal COLA Act, H.R. 491/S. 624. This would provide FERS retirees the same COLA as those given to CSRS retirees and Social Security recipients. Currently FERS retirees get a smaller "Diet COLA" that can result in FERS retirees receiving tens of thousands of dollars less over a their retirement period.

Las Cruces Chapter 182

By Steven C. Singleton, Federation and Las Cruces Chapter Treasurer

Greetings from NARFE Chapter 182 Las Cruces, New Mexico!

We are a very active Chapter hosting breakfast meetings the second Saturday of the month from September through May. Our meetings are held at the Las Cruces Village-Independent Living, 3011 Buena Vida Circle (Creative Arts Room), Las Cruces, NM.

Some of our more popular meetings include:

The September Legislative meeting where the US Congressional members or their representatives are invited to speak and meet our members. We can raise concerns about our benefits and possible impact due to proposed legislation.

The November meetings is held in conjunction with the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB)/Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Open Season Health Fairs. Representatives from the health insurance providers including Blue Cross/Blue Shield, GEHA, Presbyterian, Aetna, and others provide information on changes to the current plans and new plans. The Representatives are available to answer questions.

The December meeting has a holiday theme, with games and entertainment.

The January meeting is our annual Alzheimer's (ALZ) Program with local speakers who address ALZ prevention, latest medications and treatments, financial assistance, and local resources.

The other five meetings have various speakers addressing topics of interest to our members.

Meeting details are published in our Chapter Newsletter which is posted on the Southwest Community on FedHub as well as on the Southwest Federation Microsite under construction: narfe.org/sw/. Our newsletters are published nine times per year, February through May, and August through December.

Come join us for a meeting! Reservations and contact information are in our newsletters.



Santa Fe Chapter 186's Recruitment Efforts
By Kay Snowfleet, Santa Fe Chapter Legislative VP

Our Chapter was requested by the Federation President to report on some of our recent recruitment efforts in this newsletter. This could be the beginning of other Federation Chapters and National Members reporting on their "Best Practices" that could help others in recruiting new members and publicizing NARFE. We look forward to hearing about what others are doing in future newsletters.

Like many chapters, the Santa Fe Chapter has been losing members in recent years. While we used to have robust turnout for our monthly meetings, when COVID hit and in-person meetings were not permitted, we began using Zoom. Using that tool enabled the chapter to continue to exist with a small core group. Now that COVID is less of a threat, we have been looking for ways to encourage more members to become active and to recruit new members.

Here are some of the things we have done or planned to do. We have:

--attended several of the area health fairs where agencies allowed us to do so. Employees were interested and a few may have joined because of that recruiting.

--phoned new members to welcome them to NARFE and invite them to attend a chapter meeting. We are also sending hard copy welcome letters via USPS mail to every new member.

--designed a flyer to publicize NARFE and our chapter's meetings which members will place on community bulletin boards. Several of our members leave their NARFE magazines in their doctor's or dentist's offices.

--made efforts to get announcements of our meetings in both print and online community newspapers. We're encouraging our active members to talk up NARFE and our chapter in their social media postings.

--have planned an in person meeting at a restaurant in April with a speaker who will make a presentation on an issue of local concern. While we have had speakers at our meetings in the past, we plan to do so more frequently going forward.

While we expect we will continue using Zoom for most meetings, we're hoping that an occasional in-person meeting will encourage more members to be active.

Tucson Chapter 55

**By Etta Bryant, Tucson Chapter
President**

The NARFE Tucson Chapter 55 is the oldest chapter in the Southwest Federation. It was chartered in November 1951. But like most other chapters unless some other members start mentoring and showing an interest in the chapter and/or the federation elected officer positions, the Tucson Chapter 55 will go the way of so many other chapters. Arizona at one time had 26 chapters and now is down to only 4 chapters. Why do our chapters close? For lack of our members being willing to be an officer – president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

What does it take to be one of these officers? Just someone willing to give it a try. Learn by observing what that officer does, talk with the person currently in that position, and ask questions. Every officer is more than willing to discuss what they do and show you. These positions are not difficult. If those of us in these positions can do it, so can you. Remember, some of us have been in these positions for way too long and others may get the impression that no one else can do it. They are WRONG. We all make mistakes. So, if you want to continue to protect your/our federal benefits, every member needs to do their part.

The Tucson 55 Chapter participates in the Open Season health fairs each fall. We have several members who enjoy working at these and meeting federal employees and retirees. Now some chapters remark that we never know if anyone ever joins. Well, that may be true but by attending and advising these employees about NARFE, they will learn about NARFE and all the benefits that we have and are at risk.

In the past, Tucson 55 has participated in the Memorial Day parade at Tucson Estates. We decorate a vehicle and carry our banner and flags. We have been invited again this year but as of this writing, I do not know if this will be done or not. Again, we cannot get enough members to help. This parade is sponsored by American Legion Post 102, AMVETS Post 770, and TEPOA. Following the parade there is a ceremony and a fly-over by Davis Monthan Air Force Base.

Our program chair has provided some very interesting and varied program speakers each month and our November meeting is our annual chapter health fair. We had commitments from Blue Cross, Aetna, and GEHA last fall but at the last-minute GEHA cancelled and many of our members were disappointed. This is an opportunity for our members to ask questions of the health insurance company representatives and to meet these representatives.

See the Arizona Federation website at <https://sites.google.com/view/narfeazfed/chapters/tucon-0055> to see pictures and get more information on our chapter. Hopefully, the new Southwest Federation website will be up soon.