



NARFE
MISSOURI FEDERATION
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
(via Zoom meeting platform)
April 22, 2021

The conference opened at 10:30 a.m. with comments from 1st Vice-President and Conference Planning Committee Co-chair, Sherry Haskins. She addressed the virtual attendees with instructions with regard to muting their computer sound and how to use the chatbox to ask questions. Sherry also informed the gathering about the evaluation on the Federation website.

After Sherry's initial greeting, there was a moment of silence in honor of fellow Federation members who are not longer with us. Immediately following the moment of silence, Sherry recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Turning the meeting over to 2nd Vice-President and Conference Co-chair, Laura Cowart, Laura thanked Sherry and the other Committee members and also thanked the approximately thirty-five federation members for attending online. Laura went on to announce that the 2022 State Conference recently approved by the Board will be held in-person in Springfield, MO on May 4-5.

President Emerson Kretzer focused his remarks on membership and legislation. National membership stands at approximately 169,000 members. The organization faces difficulties engaging younger federal employees. In Missouri there are 3,191 members, of which 1,694 belong to chapters. Last year to help bring in new members, the Federation utilized a recruiting tool in which a new member's first year's dues would be paid by the Federation and the recruiter would receive a \$10 "finders fee". Although the Federation added only sixteen new members, it appears that this recruiting tool will be used again this year. President Kretzer challenged each state member to recruit at least one person. As our president stated, ... "the greater our number, the more voices are heard in Congress".

As for legislative issues concerning federal employees and retirees, President Kretzer reported that the Schedule F order issued by the previous administration was rescinded on January 22, 2021. The order would have created a new federal employee classification that could undermine an employee's due process rights as outlined in civil service rules.

The next legislative topic was about H.R. 2337-the GPO/WEP Government Pension Offset/Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP) and a companion law, H.R. 82-the Social Security Fairness Act. These laws/acts would address the "penalty" paid by federal employees when they did not have to have social security deductions withheld while holding a federal job.

President Kretzer went on to talk about H.R. 304-the Equal COLA Act. This act would tackle the discrepancy between the formulas for calculating COLAs for CSRS employees and FERS employees (FERS employees receive a lower COLA and thereby affects their purchasing power throughout retirement).

The last topic on the president's agenda was H.R. 695/S. 145-the USPS Fairness Act. Reintroduced on February 1, 2021 with bipartisan support, the act would end the requirement that the US Postal Service fully pre-fund future health benefits of its retirees. Since passing the Postal Accountability Enhancement Act in 2006, the post office has incurred billions of dollars in losses, over 80% of those losses due to the health benefit pre-funding requisite. Passage of the Fairness Act would help bolster the financial condition of the USPS and curtail negative cost cutting.

1st Vice-President Sherry Haskins mentioned our online guests - Barbara Sido, NARFE Executive Director; Sam Saffa, St. Louis District Director for Senator Joshua Hawley and; Wyatt Mullendore, Legislative Assistant to Congressman Sam Graves (6th District).

The conference then moved to the treasurer's report. Treasurer Marcy Nelson stated that the new fiscal year's budget was approved by the board at an earlier meeting and will be posted to the federation website. She also said that the audit was completed. Marcy reported the following fiscal numbers: Balance (2020) - \$38,774.70; Checking - \$22,570.46; CD - \$16,204.24.

Secretary Gary Andrew reported that although last year's conference was cancelled due to the pandemic, the board met and installed new officers, CDLs and committee chairs (see the federation website or the newsletter for the names of those board members). Gary announced that the memorial service usually conducted at the conference would again be a part of next year's conference after a two-year hiatus. He reiterated Laura Cowart's message at the beginning of the conference that next year the conference will be held in Springfield, MO on May4-5.

Region V Vice-President Cindy Reneé Blythe followed with her report. Despite a tumultuous year, NARFE showed its first profit (not including investment income) since 2012. The organization saw an increase of \$174,000 from new sponsors. NARFE lost revenues due to the cancellation of FedCon 20, but its 'six-webinar series' brought in over \$16,700. Registration revenue from other webinars tallied \$25,868.

The Paid Parental Leave benefit provides twelve weeks of paid leave for birth, adoption or foster placement. This benefit took effect October 1.

The National Executive Board (NEB) held their first ever National Annual meeting virtually on October 28. Last August, NARFE members voted to increase dues as of January 1, 2021, an increase not seen in ten years. At a recently held NEB meeting, the board worked on updating the Policy Manual. The revisions continue to be a work in progress.

The NARFE building in Virginia had been up for sale, but is now off the market. A newly formed committee will research creating an up to date marketing plan. COVID standards and guidelines have forced headquarters to allow only eight to ten employees to work in the current building. Therefore, NARFE is searching for a smaller building to replace the current facility.

Membership is always a prime talking point, whether at the national level, regional level or chapter level, as it has declined for many years. In 2015, NARFE's membership rolls totaled 225,558. That number sank to 170,737 in 2020. And, as of the end of March 2021, we have 166,420 members, a loss of 54,821 since 2015. The losses average out to almost 11,000 members per year. NARFE can not sustain such membership losses. It is up to each member to help keep our organization viable – we've been around for 100 years; let's work to see another 100 years. What can you do? Pass along extra copies of NARFE magazine to federal employees you may know; forward the Federal Newsliner; share a NARFE news item or video or; wear NARFE branded clothing items. It might just spark a line of discussion as to who we are and what we do. For this one special year, consider supporting your organization by contributing to the Century Club.

From National Headquarters, Executive Director Barbara Sido touched on a handful of topics. She spoke about how the pandemic affected the staff. Almost overnight, staffers went from working at the office to working from their homes.

This year LegCon will go virtual. There will be specialized training and dedicated breakout meetings. To facilitate communicating with legislators on the Hill, NARFE has engaged the services of Advocacy Associates to coordinate meeting schedules. There will be an Early Bird Discount (10%) on the \$150 registration fee until May 7.

The U.S. Senate passed a resolution congratulating NARFE on its 100 years of service. The House brought a similar resolution (Res. 131) to the floor, but then referred it back to committee. If one donates \$100 or more (Century Club), you will get cool swag and recognition in NARFE Magazine and on the national website. To celebrate our 100 years of existence, Federations or chapters can hold food drives or build programs around the centennial. Also to recognize the Centennial, there will be a virtual gala held in the not too distant future. More details on this event will come out later this year. One final word on the centennial – please view the commemorative video on the NARFE website. It makes the case for NARFE and tells its story. It is a good recruiting tool and can be the basis for content at a chapter meeting.

The NEB will meet tomorrow (4/23/21). One major item on the agenda will be an update from the Membership Committee to include strategies and recommendations for increasing membership.

Executive Director Sido then thanked the attending members for all that they do. She closed by expressing how proud she was of the Missouri Federation.

President Kretzer announced the recipients of two Alzheimer's Association fundraising awards. Chapter 112 (Greater St. Louis) garnered the award for highest total funds raised and Chapter 683 (Hannibal) took the award for highest per capita funds raised.

Continuing with the topic of the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Coordinator Lois Nowlin with the help of Michele Brown presented a short video titled "Know Where Alzheimer's Hides". Attendees were urged to get involved, stay informed and become an advocate for this dreadful disease. Resources can be found on the Alzheimer's website. Lois reminded members to register for the Walk To End Alzheimer's and the fundraiser The Longest Day.

Elbert Williams, NARFE-PAC Chairperson told the gathering that despite a decrease in membership, contributions were up. Missouri members contributed over \$30,000 for the first calendar quarter. The fundraising goal for 2021-22 was increased \$100,000. To date, there have been no disbursements to Missouri legislators. To get pro-NARFE legislation passed, we need to support NARFE-PAC, Elbert stated to the group.

The conference closed out with a number of board executives expressing their thanks. Marcy, the conference's "technical host", thanked Michele and Sherry for lending a hand on the tech front. Laura thanked the Planning Committee for their work in getting this first virtual State Conference up and running. She also thanked Barbara Sido for joining us and expressing her thoughts. Laura then thanked Cindy for her input and guidance.

Sherry moved to adjourn the conference; Laura voiced a second and the motion was passed thus bringing to an end the first virtual Annual Conference of the Missouri Federation.

Respectfully submitted by

Gary Andrew

Secretary, Missouri Federation