

THE 740 EXPRESS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, CHAPTER 740

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June 1, 1998

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Next Chapter Meetings: Our next meeting will be on Thursday June 18th at the Warrington Motor Lodge, Route 611 (just North of Street Rd.) at 12:00 Noon. Call Beryl Fogelsanger (343-3467) early in the week.

Glenn Pearson NARFE District 2 VP will address Chapter 740 during the meeting. Please attend and show your support.

SUMMER WISHES: Enjoy the summer months ahead and plan to join us in the Fall as we support your retirement interests. Let us know if you have any suggestions to improve our chapter representation and items of concern or interest. Wish all good health, happiness and prosperous future.

FEHBP premium impact: NARFE President Jackson wrote each Member of the House of Representatives prior to the votes urging the House to defeat the Kasich budget. The letter reads "NARFE opposes the fiscal 1999 budget resolution because it instructs the Government Reform and Oversight Committee to reduce mandatory spending by \$1.6 to \$1.8 billion. While we understand there is no underlying policy recommendation in this instruction, these numbers are not meaningless. In fact, they are consistent with the illustrative cuts in the Budget Committee's May 12 plan to achieve these savings by limiting the annual growth in the government's share of Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) premiums to the consumer price index. When combined with discretionary appropriation reductions, more than \$3.1 billion in savings would come from cost-shifting FEHBP premiums onto retirees and employees. Presently, increases in FEHBP plan premiums are borne equally by the federal government and enrollees. According to a CBO estimate prepared last year, the added annual cost to enrollees would be \$400 in the year 2002 and more in later years. Rep. Tom Davis obtained a floor commitment from Chairman Kasich that the provision impacting federal retiree FEHBP premiums would NOT appear in the conference version of the budget resolution.

Time Running Out on Offset Bill

There is not much time left in this session of Congress to deal with legislation that would raise spousal Social Security benefits for thousands of federal employees. The measures would soften the effects of the government pension offset. Supporters hope to push Congress into quick action. The GPO applies to the benefit due a spouse who is (or will be) receiving a pension from a job where he or she did not pay Social Security taxes - i.e., anyone covered by the CSRS retirement system. The Social Security benefit is reduced \$2 for every \$3 an employee receives in a CSRS annuity. The offset law has had the unintended result of virtually impoverishing some elderly widows and widowers. The National Association of Retired Federal Employees (1-703-838-7760) has been in the forefront of efforts to correct GPO inequities or repeal the offset law. Both the House and Senate are considering offset reform bills.

The sponsors of the leading GPO and WEP bills also testified. Rep. Bill Jefferson (D-LA) noted his GPO bill, HR 2273, has 165 cosponsors from both parties. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has 36 cosponsors for his bill, HR 2549, to reform the WEP. Rep. Max Sandlin (D-TX) issued a press release touting his NARFE-backed legislation, HR 3077, to repeal the WEP. July's Retirement Life will provide full coverage of this hearing.

Information you could Use: If you receive any **UNORDERED merchandise** through the mail, you can consider it a gift and need not respond to any bills. You have no obligation to return it or pay sender.

Obtain **Credit card information reports** (small fee) at EQUIFAX 1-800-685-1111; EXPERIAN (formerly TRW) 1-888-397-3742; or TRANS UNION 1-800-888-5213. You may want to request that your name be removed from list to stop receiving "pre-approved" credit cards as well as personal information be disseminated.

Consider obtaining a **LIVING WILL**. Contact the State Department of Aging, 555 Walnut St. 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17101-1919

For drivers who cannot hear sirens of approaching emergency vehicles a product called EARS (EARLY ALERT RESPONSE SYSTEM) can be attached to your car to recognize and alert you. Contact 1-800-347-6335.

NECROLOGY: Please let us know when you hear that one of our honored members has passed on, so we can share it with friends and associates. Remember them, their spouse and families with memories and appreciations for their accomplishments and duty to the United States.

Membership: Please encourage your fellow Federal retirees to join and retain membership in NARFE Chapter 740. Our chapter seeks strong, involved support so we can urge legislation that will strengthen our retirement. Remember your spouse is encouraged to become a member. Spouse members will also benefit as surviving retirement recipients and should be involved and protected. Our Chapter represents both the retiree and spouses, both are invited to join and participate.

Alternative TAX Plan: This chapter is reviewing leading Tax Plan proposals with the intent to submit our recommendations to NARFE HQ to influence and gain federal legislation that will support Federal retirees, as well as all U.S. Citizens. If you have any suggestions or comments you would like to contribute to our review please send them, so it may be reflected in our final version that we forward to NARFE HQ and others.

Need Help?: Call the Federal Retiree Assistance Center, (215) 597-0419. The Center is located at the Federal Building, Rm. 1208, 6th and Arch Sts, Philadelphia, and handles OPM/FEHB problems only (incorrect payments, non-receipt of checks, etc). Office hours are 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. OPM can be contacted on ANY retirement matter by calling 1-888-767-6738. Be sure to have your PIN number handy.

OPM's Annuitant Express

The toll-free automated telephone system that went into operation in January of last year, for its first service permitted retirees to make federal tax withholding changes during the 1996 tax season. The number, in case you've mislaid it, is 1-800-409-6528 -- and don't forget your PIN number.

Important numbers: Capitol switchboard 202-224-3121, 1800-522-6721, 1-800-692-3524, 1-800-972-3524; Bill Status 202-225-1772; White House comment line 202/456-1111 (FAX 2461); Supreme Court 202-479-3000; OPM 202-606-1000; Federal Election Commission 1-800-424-9530; NARFE Hotline 202-234-0503; president@whitehouse.gov; NARFE HQ www.narfe.org; www.visi.com/juan/congress If you have access to the Internet review our newsletter and links on WEB Site: www.crompton.com/NARFE740 Sign up for Free FEDWEEK at: www.FEDweek.com

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