



# **Kansas NARFE News**

## **From Your Federation Officers**

### **January 2017**



#### **Federation President's Message**

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Shortly our Nation will be changing leadership and with that comes a fear of the unknown. I've always heard that the rippling effects of a Presidential change take 4 years to be felt. I'm not sure that is true and I'm somewhat apprehensive with the platter of suggestions being talked about on the Hill. I'm sure you know that as with several previous Administrations, federal employees are at the head of the line for changes.

I'm sure there will be numerous Calls to Action from the Legislative Department in Headquarters. Jessica and John work countless hours trying to get our Congressional members to comprehend the full ramifications of their proposed legislation. Without the help of our members, their work can only go so far.

Kansas will certainly be going through a change – with the confirmation of Mike Pompeo as Director of Central Intelligence Agency and Representative Roger Marshall representing the 1<sup>st</sup> District. There will be a special election to fill the vacant 4<sup>th</sup> District seat and that may not be done by the time the NARFE Legislative Training is scheduled.

The Legislative Training is scheduled for March 12-15, 2017 at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center in Alexandria VA. On Wednesday, March 15 all participants will travel to Capitol Hill for Congressional meetings. If you have not attended, the training is very worthwhile and the trip to the Hill very interesting and educational. The opportunity to personally address federal issues with our representatives is second to none. Read more about the training if the NARFE website, [www.narfe.org](http://www.narfe.org).

Another way to successfully stay up-to-date on the hot legislative issues is to sign up for your representative's newsletter. The newsletter will give you the in-and-outs of what your representative or Congressman is working on. The content will usually list the local events that they have attended and which ones they plan to attend in the future. You can use this medium to direct questions to the appropriate individuals on topics that directly concern you and your family.

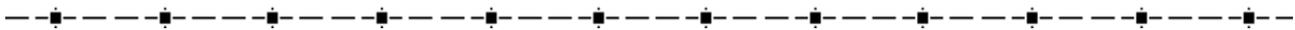
Speaking of family.....our NARFE Federation recently lost a valued member of our family. Tom Huntzinger, Federation PAC Coordinator and President, Lawrence Chapter #0378, passed away after a short fight with leukemia. Tom was diagnosed late November and was undergoing a rigorous treatment

plan at KU Medical Center. The doctors were very concerned that if he contracted an infection, the outcome could/would be devastating so Tom was not able to spend time with his grandchildren that he so loved. I received word that Tom did in fact develop an infection and with the depressed status of his immune system could not fight it off. Tom will be greatly missed.

Many of you reading this newsletter know Gary Townson, Past Federation National Legislative Chair and current President, Wichita Chapter #0138. I was saddened to receive the news that Gary lost his son, Shawn Townson on January 28<sup>th</sup> after a lengthy illness. Please keep Tom and Gary's family in your thoughts and prayers during their time of loss.

Lois Nowlin, Region V Alzheimer's Coordinator, recently report the funding of four new research grants. The four grants are: (1) Roles of TREM2 in Alzheimer's Disease Pathogenesis, \$240,000.00 over 3 years; (2) Sequencing in Healthy APOE e4 Samples to Identify Protective Variants in Alzheimer's Disease, \$99,056.00 over 2 years; (3) Dyrk1A in Early Onset of Alzheimer's Pathology in Down Syndrome, \$91,577.00 partial sponsorship and (4) 2017 Sex and Gender in Alzheimer's Grant, \$40,000.00 partial sponsorship. These grants are made possible by the generous donations that all our members make. A total of 71 grants have been funded to date.

Please make plans to attend the Federation Convention April 23 thru 25. The convention location is the Atrium Hotel and Convention Center, Hutchinson, Ks. The Federation Executive Board is the host for the convention this year as there were no chapters requesting to fulfill those duties. The registration packets have been mailed to all Chapter Presidents and Secretaries. There is a registration form included in this newsletter for your convenience. Please consider attending!



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We have a lot to look forward to in 2017. I can't say it will be all good. The following are excerpts from the "exit memo" from OPM recapping their initiatives under the Obama administration and recommendations for the incoming administration. Share with your members at your meeting or portions in your newsletter.

It's important to send a representative to the Legislative Conference if you can. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at the Federation Convention in April in Hutchinson.

Elevating the Government's Role as a Model Employer

Creating an environment where employees want to work is critical as the Federal Government seeks to attract, engage, and retain the best and the brightest employees who are choosing between Federal service and opportunities in other sectors. As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government is also well-positioned to lead by example and demonstrate the value of adopting the workplace practices

that reflect the changing American economy. This includes expanding outreach to people from all segments of society so that the Federal Government better reflects the population it serves, and promoting a fair and inclusive work environment that gives every employee the opportunity to perform his or her best. Some accomplishments include:

- Expanding opportunities for people from all segments of society:
- Hiring People with Disabilities. People with disabilities now comprise 14.4% of the Federal Workforce, the highest percentage on record.
- Veterans Employment. Since 2009, approximately 500,000 new hires have been veterans; the percentage of veterans in the Federal Workforce has increased from 25.8% to 31.0% during this same period.
- Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated People. Recently, OPM finalized a new policy to “ban the box” for Federal employment by delaying inquiries into criminal history until a conditional offer has been made. Creating a modern workplace that treats every employee fairly and gives everyone an opportunity to perform their best:
- Closing the gender pay gap. OPM worked with agencies across government to analyze pay disparities and develop strategies to address them.
- Implementing Marriage Equality. When the Supreme Court rendered its landmark decision, *U.S. v Windsor*, the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHB) and OPM’s Retirement Services were the first government-wide benefit programs to fully implement changes to their eligibility rules to ensure that LGBT employees and their families have access to the same benefits.
- Increasing workplace flexibilities. In 2008, 7.6% of Federal employees were eligible for telework. By 2016, over 70% in the DC area and over 40% were eligible government-wide. The Administration also established a policy to provide six weeks of advanced sick leave for employees to care for a newborn child.
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in the Federal Workforce. Supporting survivors of domestic violence who are Federal employees. OPM issued guidelines on establishing policies for addressing domestic violence in the Federal Workforce and convened an interagency work group to share best practices on ways to support survivors.

Embracing workplace flexibilities that serve the modern family: Many Americans today, regardless of where they may live, both work and have responsibilities caring for children, aging parents, or family members. OPM has supported legislation that would provide Federal employees six weeks of paid administrative leave for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. It is long past time that Congress enacts legislation to create paid parental leave for men and women in the Federal Workforce—and the rest of the economy.

Making diversity and inclusion core to the organizational mission.

Building a World Class 21st Century Federal Workforce. Some accomplishments include:

- Bringing students and recent graduates into government: Finding creative new ways to recruit and hire top talent with high-demand skill sets:
- Addressing cybersecurity workforce needs as a model for broader reform.
- Fellowship programs to attract proven leaders into government service. Helping agencies use available tools to meet recruitment needs:
- The Hiring Excellence Campaign. In the spring of 2016, OPM launched a nationwide “Hiring Excellence Campaign,” a series of training sessions with Federal HR professionals and hiring

managers designed to address common barriers that agencies face during the hiring process. The campaign was designed to spread best practices and help agencies use existing authorities to meet their needs.

- Enhancing USAJobs.gov. After years of customer service challenges, OPM embarked on an aggressive plan to improve the experience for job-seekers and agencies. Through a series of upgrades that create a more user-friendly experience.

Developing the Federal Government's cadre of senior leaders: To unlock the full potential of the new workforce, we need to modernize our management systems and processes to adapt our core principles to a 21st century context. In pursuing such reform, there are a number of specific principles to keep in mind:

- Leaders who prioritize human capital: To compete for top talent, the government needs to adapt by facilitating a more fluid, flexible path in and out of Federal service. Rather than focusing on ways to keep employees for their entire careers, we should embrace modern reality and seek to make Federal service a coveted stop in every professional's successful career trajectory
- Rewarding Excellence with opportunities to take on greater challenges, build skills, and grow as professionals and leaders.
- Commitment to Skill Development for Federal employees' skills need to keep pace with the government's evolving mission.
- Engaging the workforce through labor-management partnerships to engaged workforce is more effective, efficient, and innovative. By including employees at all levels—not just leadership—in decisions that impact their work environment.

Goals:

Improving the functioning of the current personnel system:

- Expanding the Hiring Excellence Campaign.
- Implementing the Competitive Service Act.
- Targeted legislative fixes to bring in students, recent graduates, and high-priority talent on a temporary basis
- Building a Trusted Workforce

OPM plays a role in this effort by conducting 95% of Federal background investigations that gather information used by agencies to make employment and security clearance decisions. During this Administration, OPM has worked hard to strengthen and modernize the background investigations process, and has developed a roadmap for how to continue down this path. In particular, OPM has focused on:

Establishing the National Background Investigations Bureau:

- New tools and capacity to improve operations and reduce the backlog.
- Dedication to customer service.

Striving Towards Operational Excellence:

Enhanced customer service delivery to help families sign up for free and low-cost school lunches: By posing the problem to eligible families and school officials, the team worked with USDA officials to

review the rules of the program and brainstorm solutions. Together, they found that simple changes to the application form would improve the application process and thereby expand students' access to nutritious food. In 2017, OPM's Federal Executive Institute will offer the first course on process improvement methods like Lean Six Sigma and human-centered design.

Providing first-rate health benefits choices at an affordable cost: Providing high quality health benefits is a critical way to promote the government as an employer of choice. Over the course of the Administration, the FEHB has continued to improve benefits by extending coverage to dependents of FEHB enrollees up to age 26, introducing comprehensive tobacco cessation coverage, expanding coverage of Applied Behavior Analysis for individuals with autism, encouraging parity for mental health and substance use disorder services, and expanding access to treatment for individuals with gender dysphoria. At the same time, by leveraging economies of scale, embracing a value based purchasing approach, and improving analytical capability, since 2011 FEHB has experienced the longest sustained period of low annual premium growth in its 56 year history and kept rate increases below market average for large employers.

Using data analytics to improve FEHB performance: OPM is dedicated to improving the health outcomes for the 8.2 million Federal employees, retirees, and dependents enrolled in FEHB: To do so, FEHB developed the Plan Performance Assessment process that uses metrics to examine plans in critical areas of importance to the consumer—clinical quality, customer service, and more – and provides financial rewards to those that perform well. By tracking metrics like readmission rates, timeliness of pre-natal care, and blood pressure control, OPM uses data to create the incentive for insurers to provide top-notch care. Further, through the creation of the Health Claims Data Warehouse, OPM is supporting data-driven decisions to improve care, lower costs, and improve customer service across the program without compromising the privacy rights of individual enrollees.

#### Next Steps:

The majority of OPM's function is as a service provider to Federal agencies, employees, retirees, and their families. To meet the operational challenges of the 21st century, we must continue to find innovative ways to compete with leaders in the private sector. This will take a commitment from senior leaders across the Federal Government, including OPM, to expand and scale the new tools and processes across agencies. OPM should also continue its use of data to improve analytical capabilities across its business processes to better identify the needs of its customers, determine which areas are ripe for improvement, and construct plans for how best to use limited resources for maximum impact. In particular, OPM should continue to focus on:

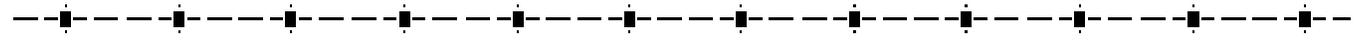
#### IT modernization:

Continued improvements in customer service for Federal annuitants: By expanding the use of online portals, using modern quality improvement techniques to streamline the process, and embracing new metrics to identify ways to improve the process, OPM has strengthened the service provided to retirees and their families in state-of-the art tools.

#### Conclusion:

I believe that under President Obama's leadership, OPM has made real progress during this Administration towards giving these dedicated public servants the tools they need to succeed. I see that progress every day. Whether it's a nurse hired under an emergency hiring authority deployed to fight Zika, a person with disabilities thriving in a new role, or a Federal employee's child with autism

receiving the treatment that she needs, I am reminded of how supporting the Federal Workforce and giving them and their families the tools to succeed is essential for serving the American people in the 21st century.



***Secretary***

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I hope you had a Merry Christmas and Happy New year with family and friends. As the weather turns colder we huddle inside to keep warm. Time to curl up with a good book and some warm cocoa.

Each chapter should have elected officers for the new year, and an updated F-7 form should be submitted as soon as possible to NARFE HQ, with a copy sent to me as Federation Secretary, a copy to the Federation President, and a copy to your Area Vice-President. A letter dated October 1<sup>st</sup> with all the specific details, including mailing addresses was transmitted to every chapter secretary. Every chapter also has the option to submit the F-7 form online. If you were able to utilize this option, the only additional action that was needed was to notify your appropriate Area Vice-President, either with an e-mail copy of the form that you received once you submitted the form online, or by printing a copy of the HQ reply and mail that to your Area Vice-President.

Very shortly, each chapter secretary will receive, if they haven't already, the convention packet with all the appropriate convention forms, i.e., Convention information including registration forms, all pertinent credential forms, and other forms that should be completed by each chapter. Please consider attending the State Convention in Hutchinson this April. The committee is busy preparing for your comfort. Hope to see you all in attendance.



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***Treasurer***

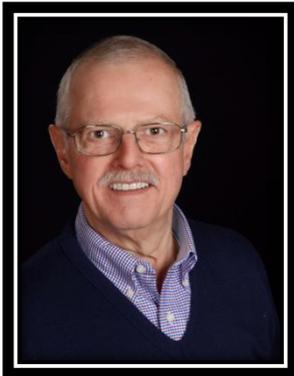
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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. Hope everyone is enjoying their holiday season, Looking forward to seeing all NARVE members and their guests at the 2017 State Convention in Hutchinson in April. Your Federation Board is working on making this Convention a success. I am working on the 50/50 drawing which will again be held during the convention for all NARFE members. One member will win 50% of the money received. The other 50% goes to the federation treasury to be used in carrying out the duties of the Federation. Most of the work is done by volunteers, but we still need to fund some of the expenses of these volunteers.



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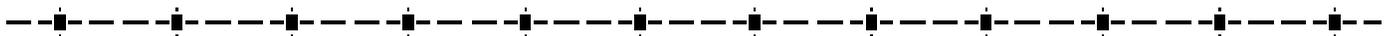
Well the elections have all happened and the new Congress has been sworn in and a new President is set to take office. Many are looking forward to this change with great anticipation but many are looking ahead with a dread of impending doom. And they have that feeling of dread for some very good reasons. The initial actions by the Congress and the proposed list of candidates for most of the high-level cabinet level appointees should give everyone in the federal government ample reason for concern. Most, if not all, of the proposed cabinet level appointees are adamantly opposed to the missions of the agencies they are being appointed to run. That should send a chill and feeling of dread throughout the agency workforces. If that weren't enough here are just a few of the things that will have the potential to wreak havoc on federal employees and retirees:

1. The President-elect has proposed a federal hiring freeze.
2. The President-elect has proposed a reduction in the workforce through a process of only allowing one hire for every two employees who leave.
3. The gutting of the ethics rules for members of Congress including declaring all of their work and papers as their personal property and not subject to subpoena or examination in any type of investigation including criminal investigations of potential wrongdoing.
4. The approval of the "Holman Rule" from 1876 which allows any member of the House to bypass the committee process altogether and make an amendment to any appropriations bill directly

targeting federal programs and/or employees by name for elimination or reducing an individual's pay to \$1.

5. A proposal to increase the retirement contribution of all federal employees, including those under CSRS, by six percent.
6. A proposal to cut the rate of return on the TSP "G" fund from the current two percent to .02% making it a worthless investment.
7. A proposal to limit the government's share of FEHBP premiums by tying the government's percentage contribution to years of service and also limiting the government's share of plan cost increases to the rate of inflation. This could change the individuals share of plan premiums from 30% to 50% over ten years.
8. A proposal to increase postal workers share of FEHBP premiums which could be translated over to the rest of the workforce and then to retirees.
9. A proposal to eliminate the FERS annuity supplement for current employees.
10. A proposal to eliminate the FERS retirement defined benefit pension altogether and have only a defined contribution type plan (TSP/401K).
11. Plans to change Medicare to a voucher program as a part of the repeal and replacement of the ACA (Obamacare). A Congressional Budget office estimate said that the average cost for health care for retirees in 2022 would be about \$20,500 per year. That would then be the base estimated price of private insurance to provide what Medicare parts A and B provide today. The voucher that the government would provide would be a fixed \$8,000 and not increase. That would leave everyone a bill of \$12,500 per year or about \$1050 per month to have the equivalent of what they get for about \$150 or less per month today.
12. A proposal to make all new hires "at will employees" thus eliminating all civil service rules and protections for those employees.
13. Blocking employees from having union dues withheld from their paychecks.
14. Ending the practice of allowing employees to conduct union business on government time.
15. Making cuts to Social Security and/or eliminating the program all together for younger generations.
16. Failing to make or approve appointments to the Merit Systems Protection Board. One of the last two members of the three person board recently resigned, leaving the board without a quorum and therefore unable to render decisions on employee appeals of adverse personnel decisions.

Please be sure to go to the NARFE website and send letters to your Congressman and Senators about the issues facing federal employees and retirees. It might be a good idea to go to the AARP website and see what they have to say about the attacks on Medicare and Social Security as those programs generally effect everyone not just federal retirees. I will be attending the NARFE Legislative Conference 12-15 March and I will provide you with an update of the situation at the Federation Convention in April.





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I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. The older I get the faster the years are going by—seems like it should still be November (that is how far behind I am).

I am not sure what we have to look forward to where the state or federal governments are concerned. Hopefully the legislators in Topeka can improve the economy by revoking the income tax exemptions for LLCs and not cutting too deeply other places—how much money is left in the highway fund after the current ice storm? Will the bill to help those on Medicaid pass? I wrote Lynn Jenkins after the fiasco with the ethics committee and included that if the Republicans use Kansas as an example for the national budget, the sun will never shine in the United States again.

I do feel that if we do not stop the negativity that is still running rampant in this country over the election, the country will be in big trouble. I do not remember politics ever being this nasty. I am also guilty of voicing my opinion, but I think it is time to stop. You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Chapter presidents, do not forget to file your 990-N. If you filed before February 28 last year, the format for filing has changed and you will have to register (you only have to register once).

I hope all chapters send at least one delegate to the convention this year. Those chapters that have not participated in the last several years are not getting the full benefits of their membership. See you at the convention.



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Greetings from Area 3.

I visited several chapters in October, November and December: Belleville, Manhattan, Junction City and Abilene. Manhattan and Junction City each had about 50 people attending and nice programs.

They celebrated birthdays and anniversaries and welcomed a few new members. At the Abilene luncheon, we competed with a busload of travelers in the room; but we enjoyed the senior ladies singing and still had a meaningful meeting. The Belleville chapter met in Scandia with a small group that is determined to keep the chapter going.

As I write this, I am reminded that this newsletter goes to NARFE members in Kansas who may not be a chapter member. As you should know, you can be just a national member. But, I would like to encourage all who are not a chapter member to consider joining a chapter that meets near you. I believe that chapter membership has much to offer: the good fellowship of meeting other NARFE members and having a meal together, sharing information about Medicare and health insurance, and meeting the chapter Service Officer who is there to help you or your survivor with benefits questions. For more information on chapter locations, meeting places and times, please contact me or the Area Vice President closer to your home.



***Alzheimer's Co-Chair***

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For people living with Alzheimer's, every discovery offers new hope. The Alzheimer's Association (the brains behind saving yours) is ready for the next stage of advancing public policy to improve the lives of people impacted by Alzheimer's disease, working collaboratively with the Trump administration and the 115th Congress.

Seven strategies for improving brain health:

- 1) Find a purpose in life
  - 2) Take up a new sport
  - 3) Have some fun every day
  - 4) Master 10 new brain-healthy recipes
  - 5) Join a new social group
  - 6) Break one bad habit that you know is harmful to the brain
  - 7) Meditate
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***Alzheimer's Co-Chair***

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The Federation Convention will be here before we know it as April is sneaking up on us quickly. Several plans are under way to make sure we once again have a successful business session. The mission, first and foremost, of NARFE is to protect the earned benefits of Federal Employees. You are probably wondering why I began my article with this thought since my duties on the Federation Executive Board are that of the Alzheimer's Co-Chair.

Over the past several years, the silent auction to benefit Alzheimer's Research has successfully raised an exceptional amount of money to fund research projects. Kansas ranks among the top 5 in contributions with well earned bragging rights. As we strive to best our contributions from the previous year, we have created a monster in silent auction items. Last year there were over 493 silent auction items that took many, many man-hours to register, mark, track, etc.

This year, I presented to the Executive Board for their approval a plan to set some guidelines for the live and silent auctions. The items that are most sought after (and fought over) are handmade craft items, homemade food items, and the themed baskets. So the Executive Board has giving their approval to limit the auction items that will be accepted to those fitting in one of the three (3) categories.

I am not trying to offend anyone, just attempting to have better management of the auction as a whole. Of course if these guidelines are not successful this year, then another option will be looked at for future conventions.





## MENUS:

### **Sunday Evening Dinner:**

*Croissant Club Sandwich  
Pasta Salad  
Iced Fudge Brownie  
Regular/Decaffeinated Coffee,  
Iced tea, Water*

### **Please Indicate your choice of entrée**

*Grilled Chicken Breast Sandwich  
Pasta Salad  
Iced Fudge Brownie  
Regular/Decaffeinated Coffee,  
Iced tea, Water*

### **Monday Luncheon:**

*Classic Cobb Salad  
Fresh Baked Breadsticks  
Regular/Decaffeinated  
Coffee, Iced tea, Water*

### **Please Indicate your choice of entrée**

*Pulled Pork Sandwich  
Pasta Salad  
Iced Fudge Brownie  
Regular/Decaffeinated  
Coffee, Iced tea, Water*

### **Monday Evening Banquet:**

*Grilled Rosemary Chicken  
Tossed Garden Salad  
Fresh Vegetables  
Dinner Roll  
Strawberry Cheesecake  
Regular/Decaffeinated Coffee,  
Iced tea, Water*

### **Please Indicate your choice of entrée**

*London Broil  
Tossed Garden Salad  
Fresh Vegetables  
Dinner Roll  
Strawberry Cheesecake Regular/  
Decaffeinated Coffee, Iced tea,  
Water*

IF YOU REQUIRE A SPECIAL DIET, PLEASE ADVISE US WHEN REGISTERING FOR THE CONVENTION.

**“IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEM DURING THE CONVENTION, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT THE CONVENTION CHAIRPERSON SO IT CAN BE HANDLED IN A TIMELY MANNER.”**

Cindy Renee' Blythe, Federation President