

**Chapter Officers**

**Mike Mellish**, President, 615-832-9192 | **Leo Baghdoian**, Vice President, 591-2558

**Nancy Wells**, Treasurer, 218-1003 | **Betty Waters**, Secretary, 661-5980 | **Carol Allen**, Sunshine Chair, 370-3060

**Clarence Bennett**, NARFE-PAC Chair | **Newsletter Editor: Mike Mellish**, [mmellish227@gmail.com](mailto:mmellish227@gmail.com)

*NARFE's mission has remained the same since 1921, to protect and improve the benefits of federal retirees, employees and their families.*

**CHAPTER MEETINGS**

We are pleased to report a very nice turnout for our chapter luncheon at the Sportsman's Grille on August 9. In addition to 13 chapter members, we were joined by 5 friends and family members. A special thanks to our luncheon group for their generous contributions of \$59 to the NARFE Alzheimer's Research Fund. A check for this amount was mailed to Donna Shackelford, our Region X Alzheimer's Chair, on August 24.

While chapter members and guests enjoyed a pleasant midday meal with good comradery and conversation at our August get together, we did have one unexpected and most unwelcome of guests – COVID-19. Fortunately, as far as we have been able to learn, only two of us were infected by this nasty visitor, with one of us testing positive the next morning and a second (Mike Mellish) testing positive two days later. Despite having the full complement of COVID shots, including the bivalent booster approved by the FDA at the end of August 2022, both members were hit surprisingly hard, experiencing some pretty serious symptoms. Follow-up thoughts: COVID is still with us, stay informed about case numbers in your area, and probably try and get the new COVID booster when it becomes available in mid- to late-September.

**Next Chapter Meeting**

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 10:30 a.m.  
(Online Zoom Session)

Our next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, September 13, will be held online via Zoom. In addition to reports from chapter officers, we will be soliciting input from members regarding our upcoming holiday luncheon at Mere Bulles on Monday, December 4, and entertaining any other topics members might wish to discuss.

**Online meeting participation via computer:**

Below is the unique link for our September

meeting. Depending on how you sign in, you may be asked to enter the unique meeting ID and passcode.

**Zoom Meeting Link:**

XXXXXXXXXX

Meeting ID: xxx xxxx xxxx

Passcode: xxxxxx

**Call-in meeting participation via conventional phone call:**

- 1) Dial the following phone number: 312-626-6799
- 2) Enter the unique meeting ID for our meeting followed by a hashtag: xxx xxxx xxxx#
- 3) When asked for Participant ID simply type in a hashtag: #
- 4) Enter the unique password for today's meeting: xxxxxx

While in a Zoom meeting, enter \*6 on your phone's keypad to mute or unmute your conversation.

**OFFICER REPORTS & OTHER NEWS**

Nancy Wells, Treasurer, reports that as of August 16 we had \$3,019.12 in our Truist checking account. Nancy sent Mike Mellish a check for \$66.78 to reimburse him for two months of Zoom subscription costs (\$27.96) and the costs of printing and mailing the April, May, and June newsletters (\$38.82). The chapter received \$59.88 in dues rebates from NARFE Headquarters on August 16.

John Hatton, VP for Policy and Programs at NARFE HQ, reached out to us on August 24 with a status update regarding our request to look into the erroneous Congressional District (CD) assignments we identified for approximately one-third of our members. We had initially brought this matter up with NARFE HQ back in February, shortly after they had announced that they had completed the updates to member records necessitated by the once-in-a-decade changes to CDs completed in advance of the 2022 midterm elections. John

apologized for just now getting back to us, and provided that HQ staff have been assigned to the case and are actively working on this project.

The chapter welcomes Eric Kareh, who joined us as a new member of Chapter 227 in August.

### **UPCOMING FEHB OPEN SEASON**

This year's FEHB open season will run from Monday, November 13 thru Monday, December 11.

While the start date is still a couple months away, we have been in touch with three FEHB insurance providers and have established tentative dates and times for representatives from each to provide us with plan updates and handouts for 2024. At present, the schedule looks like this: Aetna/Mail Handlers (representative TBD) on **October 18** via Zoom; GEHA (Keisha Moore) on **November 1** via Zoom; and BlueCross BlueShield of TN (Stacie Ledridge) on **November 8**, hopefully an in-person meeting. All meetings are scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. Central Time. Mark your calendars!

Of course, big changes are on the horizon for U.S. Postal Service (USPS) workers and annuitants. While nothing differs as far as this year's FEHB open season is concerned, USPS workers and annuitants will basically be forced to make a number of critical decisions next year, beginning with the six-month Special Enrollment Period (SEP)

for Medicare Part B which will run from April 1-September 30, 2024. The SEP will provide eligible USPS annuitants and family members the opportunity to enroll in Medicare Part B penalty free. This seems like a particularly good deal, especially for older annuitants who may not have signed up for Part B coverage when they turned 65, or were first required to sign up for coverage. On the other hand, in a [comment letter](#) sent to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on June 1, President William Shackelford requested that OPM provide additional information about various aspects of the SEP which NARFE feels are not adequately addressed in their [interim final rule for the Postal Service Health Benefits \(PSHB\) Program](#) published in the Federal Register on April 6, 2023. According to a report published by the Congressional Research Service in February 2022, entitled [Proposed Changes to USPS Health Benefits in the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022](#), approximately 24% of postal retirees were not enrolled in Medicare Part B at that time.

During next year's open season, USPS workers and retirees will no longer be able to enroll in an FEHB plan, and will be faced with choosing new health insurance coverage from a list of plans to be offered under the yet-to-be established PSHB Program.