



**National Active and Retired
Federal Employees Association**

Region V and the Future of NARFE

At the recent Region V College of NARFE Knowledge (CONK), I conducted a brief workshop on the future of NARFE. The attendees were asked to consider themselves FON committee members and address their concerns and recommendations about the future of the Association. After a flip chart review of the current (1947) NARFE organizational structure, noting that the vast majority of our local chapter members are not actively involved in NARFE. These members pay their dues, receive the magazine and attend an occasional chapter summer picnic or a holiday luncheon, but that is it.

The startling loss in local chapter membership for various reasons, the inability to recruit officers leading to the closing of chapters, and the spectacular growth of e-NARFE as a membership alternative has forced NARFE to address the long-term future of the Association.

It was the overall consensus of the attendees (the ad hoc FON Committee) that NARFE has to change in order to survive. It was speculated that NARFE probably has outlived the 1947 organizational structure. To address this, the following queries were proffered:

Has contemporary communications made NARFE's 1947 multilayered administrative structure obsolete? If so, what should go and what should remain?

Is the chapter concept obsolete? What would replace chapters as the fundamental management and voting element? Without chapters, how would NARFE's grassroots advocacy be conducted? In today's world, is bottom-up management still viable?

Is one member/one vote an answer?

Is e-NARFE the future of the Association?

Is the headquarters' management structure too top heavy?

Is there managerial continuity with elected national officers continually changing?

Does NARFE require four resident national officers?

Should there be professional management by a chief executive officer schooled specifically in membership driven non-profit management?

The Region V ad hoc FON Committee's conclusions were the following:

The attendees seemed somewhat overwhelmed by the exercise and had there been more preparation (handouts, etc.), the comfort level would have been higher. However, it was clear from the outset that the group understood the need for organizational change. The loss in membership concerned them but a solution was totally elusive. The question raised by a frustrated attendee was, "Why is this happening? Why aren't we getting our message out?"

A majority of attendees saw the value of and the need for e-NARFE. 15,000+ members in #2363 told that story.

What a future restructured NARFE would look like was not well articulated, especially at the headquarters level. It was apparent that the attendee's NARFE experiences and organizational knowledge were principally at their chapter and federation level. The impression was that the attendees wanted to receive guidance and direction on this issue rather than providing it.

Contemporary communications and the future of NARFE was a touchy subject. A number of the older attendees disclaimed computer ownership. A paperless NARFE was a sensitive subject for several.

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