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**CC:** Carolyn Dorf <cdorf@narfe.org>  
**SUBJECT:** Protect America's Heartbeat Monthly Call Recap  
**DATE:** Friday, September 18, 2015 2: 27 PM

Dear PAH Region Call Participants,

Thank you again for joining us on our calls this month. A reminder that these calls are open to all NARFE members with an interest in legislation and taking a lead role in our Protect America's Heartbeat Program. Please forward this recap to members who may be interested. If you or a member would like to receive reminders and recaps of the calls directly, please e-mail me directly to be added to the disbursement list.

Below is a recap of the calls, including answers to some of the questions that were asked.

**Legislative Update:**

Yesterday afternoon, Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) introduced the Senate version of postal reform legislation. You can read NARFE's response to the proposal [here](#). The Improving Postal Operations, Service and Transparency Act (iPost), S. 2051, is similar to the Senate Postal reform legislation that was introduced during the last Congress. There are some important policy areas that NARFE has noted:

- Last year's legislation included a provision that would have allowed the Postal Service to bargain over retirement benefits. That is not included in S. 2051.
- While the legislation does include major changes to FECA, the changes are for prospective injuries. FECA is the federal employees' version of workers compensation. FECA changes proposed in previous legislation would have applied to individuals already on the program.
- The proposal does include the proposal to create a Postal Employee Health Benefits Program (PEHBP) that mirrors the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). At this time, NARFE does not have concerns with this proposal.
- The required enrollment in Medicare for postal employees and retirees remains in the bill and unchanged from last Congress. NARFE continues to have concerns with this provision and is working with legislators to make changes.

The House and Senate are expected to introduce and pass their own versions of postal reform. They will then iron out differences in conference. Negotiations in the House are ongoing, but we don't know where the legislation is in the process. Now that the Senate has introduced legislation, there will be a mark-up in the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee before it is debated on the floor. There is no timeline for the legislation but it is likely to at least pass the Senate with changes. An action alert will soon be available on the NARFE Legislative Action Center.

The remainder of September on Capitol Hill is expected to be focused on the need to pass a continuing resolution (CR) before midnight on September 30. Congress is likely to pass a CR that will fund the government through mid-to-late November, or just before Thanksgiving. At that time, another CR or longer-term spending plan will have to be passed. The big question is how the Republican leadership will respond to the threats from members of their caucus to shut down the government over Planned Parenthood funding. Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) have said they oppose a government shutdown.

In addition to the need to pass a CR, Congress has to extend the Highway Trust Fund, which is currently scheduled to expire at the end of October. They will also have to raise the debt ceiling, which the Treasury Department estimates will have to be done in November or early December. Both of these issues could be wrapped into the government spending negotiations in November.

Senators Schatz (D-HI) and Mikulski (D-MD) introduced a Senate version of the Paid Parental Leave Bill (S. 2033). The House legislation was introduced earlier this year and has 56 cosponsors. The legislation will allow federal employees to use 6 of the 12 weeks of leave granted under the Family Medical Leave Act as paid leave. A modified action alert is available on the NARFE [Legislative Action Center](#) so that you can contact your Senators. You can also read NARFE's [Press Release](#) on the Senate Introduction.

Finally, an update on the OPM data breach. The most up to date information continues to be available on our [dedicated page on NARFE's website](#). OPM also has a special page on their [website](#) where they are posting updates. OPM selected the contractor for the second data breach that was announced earlier this summer. The contractor will reach out to those who were impacted and is responsible for providing three-year of ID theft protection to those who had their data compromised. This time, e-mails notifying individuals will be sent from a ".mil" or ".gov" e-mail address.

### ***Protect America's Heartbeat Update:***

Thank you to the individuals, chapters and federations who shared their experiences during Grassroots Advocacy Month. Your reports are helpful to the NARFE staff as we prepare for outreach to legislators. It is so beneficial to know how meetings in the district went and what was said. If you haven't done so yet, please report your meetings to [advocacyinaction@narfe.org](mailto:advocacyinaction@narfe.org).

Just because August is over, doesn't mean that grassroots efforts stop. We need NARFE members to continue reaching out to legislators as negotiations are ongoing – especially on the big, must-pass pieces of legislation. If you wait until after the legislation is introduced to make your first contact, you've waited too long. There are letters on the [Legislative Action Center](#) that you can use when contacting members. There are also [issue briefs](#) and other materials that you can take to any meetings or town halls that you attend.

The House has adjusted its schedule for next week because of the Pope's visit. The House will be in recess on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. They will return on Thursday and be in session for the remainder of September and into early October. The Senate will maintain its schedule and only recess next Wednesday for Yom Kippur.

The next webinar will be hosted next week. The webinar will be held Tuesday, September 22 at 10:30 am EDT and Thursday, September 24 at 2:30 PM EDT (please note the change from our usual webinar times). John Hatton, NARFE's Deputy Legislative Director, will be discussing the budget and other deadlines Congress is facing this fall, as well as the threats to federal employees' and retirees' pay and benefits this fall. There will be an opportunity to ask questions. To RSVP for the Tuesday webinar, please [click here](#) and to RSVP for the Thursday webinar, please [click here](#). To view past webinars, you can go to NARFE's [website](#).

Just a reminder to share the names and e-mail addresses of your Congressional District Leaders (CDLs) and Senatorial Leaders (SLs) with Carolyn Dorf at [cdorf@narfe.org](mailto:cdorf@narfe.org). We are using this list to reach out to CDLs while we await the development of an officer code for these positions. CDLs and SLs received the September Monthly Update and the Webinar Invite from earlier this week. They will also receive the October Monthly Update on the 28<sup>th</sup>. We are in the final stages of developing the CDL guidance for federations looking to develop the position.

### **Your Questions**

1. Should we be contacting our members of Congress over the threat of a government shutdown? We do not have any formal letters on the Legislative Action Center regarding the shutdown. However, you can write your own letter, modify an existing letter or call your legislator to say that the government should not be shut down. As we get closer to the 30th and if it appears no agreement can be reached, we will look into drafting an action alert. Keep an eye for updates in your inbox.
2. There were a couple of questions regarding the timing of the Medicare Part B Hold Harmless issue. As a quick refresher – there is a provision in Social Security law that says that your benefits check cannot go down if there is no Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). So if there is no COLA and your Medicare Part B Premiums go up (and are taken from your Social Security check) then you cannot be held responsible for the higher premium rates – this is known as hold harmless. However, a provision in Medicare law says that at least a quarter of the Part B Premiums have to be paid by enrollees. So, if there is an increase in premiums, the entire increase is shouldered by five populations – including CSRS annuitants who do not receive Social Security. Medicare premiums are estimated to rise to \$120.70 a month in 2016. But if there is a no COLA, the 30% of Medicare enrollees who are not held harmless will see their premiums rise to as much as \$159.30. There is an issue brief available [online](#) with

more background. Some NARFE members should remember when we fought this issue in 2009 and 2010. The issue brief will probably be updated once legislation is introduced but other than that, there are currently no plans to update it.

- We will have the final COLA and Medicare premiums in October. As of right now, it is expected that there will not be a COLA. The new Medicare rates will go into effect on January 1. We are awaiting legislation to be introduced that would extend the hold harmless provision to all Medicare Part B enrollees. There is an [action alert](#) on the Legislative Action Center providing background for your Representatives and Senators and asking that they support any possible legislation. NARFE is also working on the possibility of an administrative fix. Legislation will have to be passed before the end of 2015 – and the earlier the better.
  - If there is no fix and individuals are impacted by the higher premiums, they will face higher premiums for as long as there is no COLA. When we faced this situation previously, it lasted two years. In the third year, because the increase in premiums could now be spread over all Medicare Part B enrollees, those who had seen an increase in premiums for two years saw their premiums go down in the third year while everybody else's went up.
3. What is the status of any legislation requiring that Congress remain in session if there is a government shutdown? The legislation has not moved forward. However, looking at the Congressional calendar for October, neither the House nor Senate is scheduled to take a long recess until the week of October 12.
  4. As of right now, it does not look like there will be a COLA for retired federal employees. The formula used to determine the automatic adjustment is the same for retired federal employees, retired military members and Social Security recipients. Congress can step in if they want, but Congress has not stepped in recently. We will know the final COLA number in October. As of right now, active federal employees will receive a 1.3% pay raise. Because Congress has not taken action, the pay raise is determined by executive action from the President.
  5. Have there been any updates to the [Fall 2015 Talking Points](#)? No, and there are no plans to update the talking points. We will update it if necessary – depending on Congressional action. We will let NARFE members know if an update is made.
  6. Any updates on the CPI-E Bill? No, there are no updates. The legislation has not moved forward in the Congressional process.
  7. Any update on the DOL rule change? No, there are no updates. We still expect that some members of Congress will try to stop the rule change from moving forward through the appropriations process.

8. Who do I contact with any PAC Questions? The person in the Legislative Department who handles NARFE-PAC is Jason Freeman and his e-mail is [jfreeman@narfe.org](mailto:jfreeman@narfe.org). Campaigns can request PAC funds either by contacting Jason directly or by going through a local contact. If the candidate does not have a voting record, they will be asked to complete a candidate questionnaire.
9. What has NARFE-PAC raised to date? As of August 31, NARFE-PAC has raised \$637,619.77, including donations up to that point by sustainers. This is a great amount – we are well on our way to reaching our goal of raising \$1 million this election cycle. Thank you to those who have given to date and keep up the great work!
10. Who gets the call recap e-mail? The recap is e-mailed out to anybody who has asked to receive reminders and recaps of the region calls. The only people who are automatically added to the list are new Federation Presidents and Federation Legislative Chairs. If you would like to be added, please e-mail me at [sweissmann@narfe.org](mailto:sweissmann@narfe.org). Just for clarification – the post-webinar e-mails are sent to people who registered for that month's webinar.
11. Based on comments on the calls, we will start working on guidance for new CDLs on where they can get resources and information.

### **Upcoming Calls**

The November calls are currently scheduled for Wednesday, November 11 and Thursday, November 12. However, November 11 is Veterans Days and NARFE is closed. We are moving the calls currently scheduled for November 11 to Tuesday, November 10. The revised schedule is below, including our calls for next month which is unchanged.

Wednesday, October 14 and Thursday, October 15

Wednesday, October 14 at 9:30 AM EDT – Regions I and II

Wednesday, October 14 at 3:00 PM EDT – Regions VII, VIII and IX

Thursday, October 15 at 9:30 AM EDT – Regions III, IV, and X

Thursday, October 15 at 10:30 AM EDT – Regions V and VI

Tuesday, November 10 and Thursday, November 12

Please note that Daylight Savings Time ends on November 1; because of changes in daylight savings across the country, some regions' times have changed in the schedules below.

Tuesday, November 10 at 9:30 AM EST – Regions I and II

Tuesday, November 10 at 3:00 PM EST – Regions VIII and IX

Thursday, November 12 at 9:30 AM EST – Regions III, IV, and X

Thursday, November 12 at 10:30 AM EST – Regions V, VI and VII

Wednesday, December 9 and Thursday, December 10

Wednesday, December 9 at 9:30 AM EST – Regions I and II

Wednesday, December 9 at 3:00 PM EST – Regions VIII and IX

Thursday, December 10 at 9:30 AM EST – Regions III, IV, and X

Thursday, December 10 at 10:30 AM EST – Regions V, VI and VII

To join the call:

Dial 1 (888) 550-5602 or +1 212-812-2800 and enter **3562 2858** (please remember that you save NARFE money when you use the 212 number).

For quick access and to see who is on the call, you can go to <https://ccc.spiderphone.com/35622858>.

Thank you again for your continued work on behalf of NARFE and your continued participation in our regional PAH calls. Remember, these calls are open to any NARFE members so you can forward the call information. If you have any questions or need anything, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,

Sarah

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