



**REGION X REPORT**  
**William "Bill" Shackelford**  
**Spring 2016**

FIRST – Let me thank all members of your Federation for your support during the past two years as your Region Vice President, but especially the leadership of your Federation Executive Board.

In preparation for the 2016 NARFE National Convention, in Reno, I want to provide you with a summary of the most recent National Executive Board (NEB) meeting which was held at NARFE Headquarters from March 22 – 24. It was a very interesting and busy week. The discussions were very lively and we took some risks and made some very difficult decisions that if we can convince the membership, between now and the upcoming National Convention in Reno, NV, to agree with us then NARFE may be set to survive another 95 years. Doing nothing is the greatest risk all of us face. It was a very interesting and busy week. We took some risks and made some very difficult decisions that if we can convince the membership, between now and the upcoming National Convention in Reno, NV, to agree with us then NARFE may be set to survive another 95 years. Doing nothing is the greatest risk all of us face.

Before I discuss the activities of the NEB meeting, I would like to address a serious issue that was brought to our attention which if it continues could seriously impact on the decisions made at the upcoming National Convention. There continues to be a lot of misinformation circulating among our members. The NEB was made aware of one Federation that is still concerned about the various aspects of the Future of NARFE (FON) Committee to the degree that the leaders of the Federation are expressing to their members that the 2016 Federation Convention may be the last in their state. It is being expressed by these leaders that the FON Report recommended that Federations be abolished and that the abolishment could happen at the 2016 National Convention and without Federations there would be no need to continue with Federation Conventions. I want to take this opportunity to remind you that the FON Report was a set of visions for NARFE and that these visions are being closely examined by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and Strategic Planning Team (SPT). **NOTHING** pertaining to the abolishment of Federations is being placed on the Reno agenda by the NEB.

This is just one example. I believe that I can speak for President Thissen, we respect your opinions. At the same time, considering the many hours the committee, the team, and the board dedicated to the task, it is extremely disappointing to read so many negative comments, without offering any solutions. The Strategic Planning process has been open to member comment and suggestion throughout. Without positive action/change, or alternative suggestions, is the only course of action to continue our 30-year membership decline until insolvency? Please offer suggestions to the committee through [stratplan@narfe.org](mailto:stratplan@narfe.org).

During the meeting the NEB reviewed and discussed four proposals which the NEB would present to the delegates at the National Convention. The topics of these proposals included 1) One Member / One Vote; 2) Optional Chapter Membership; 3) Authorization For NEB to Adjust National Dues Within Specific Limits; and 4) Establishment Of NARFE Executive Director Position. After our discussions, it was decided that 3 of 4 proposals would be sent to the delegates. However, here is a summary of all four of these proposals.

### **ONE MEMBER / ONE VOTE**

Currently, only a small fraction of NARFE members participates in the voting process. The vast majority of members, who do not attend chapter meetings, are disenfranchised in the current voting structure. Many members cannot travel to the national convention because of their physical condition, the cost, the fact that they're still working, or for other reasons. (Others simply don't wish to attend, some because they've experienced or heard of tedious, lengthy floor debates about wording or technicalities of resolutions.) But they have made it clear that they would still like to vote in national and regional elections, and on important issues affecting their organization. All of these members pay the same dues as the rest of us and should have the same voting rights, as opposed to the current system where less than one percent of the membership makes critical decisions at the convention every two years. And the current proxy system does not serve them well. Many chapters give proxy holders little direction on how to vote, no such guidance is available when new motions are presented, and there is never any assurance that proxy holders will vote in accordance with any guidance given.

All members of the Association should have the right to vote. How can we in good conscience deny them this right? This amendment provides that voting for officers, amendments to the bylaws and resolutions will be afforded to all NARFE members. One Member One Vote has the potential to significantly increase retention by empowering members with a direct vote on important questions facing the organization. Another Federation President noted a potential advantage in recruiting as well: "If every member felt they had a direct effect on policy, they would potentially talk more positively and possibly more frequently about NARFE in their own social circles."

### **OPTIONAL CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP**

This is not an anti-chapter proposal; it's pro-NARFE. The requirement to belong to a chapter hinders both recruitment and retention. Members of the generation on which recruitment should be focused are far less likely to be joiners. We need to keep that and their preferences in mind in recruiting campaigns. But the key point in acknowledging that tendency is that it can be expected - - and research has shown -- that while many may be okay with becoming a national member, they lose interest -- and we lose them -- when they're told that they must join a chapter particularly when they perceive that they will have to attend meetings or actively participate in local activities.

In addition, prospective members have unrealistic expectations of local chapter meetings and there is confusion about the option of an electronic chapter. Also, the requirement to belong to a chapter causes dissatisfaction among existing members, as evidenced by exceptionally low chapter meeting attendance. In fact, 25 percent of lapsed membership is directly related to mandatory chapter membership.

Pages 35 and 36 in the Plan does an excellent job of explaining the need for it, including the surveys and focus groups that were conducted and analyzed by professionals in this field. It's essential if we want to grow the membership. And I don't see it as the end of chapters. They play an important role. I'm confident that those chapters that are active and that offer what current and prospective members want, e.g., info on health and retirement benefits (as opposed to speakers on subjects that have nothing to do with our mission) -- will continue well into the future. Also, the biggest reason for chapter closings is the lack of new leaders. If National and Federation Conventions evolve such that there is more emphasis on training and information sharing rather than debating and nitpicking resolutions, that could help address that pervasive problem.

If we remove the "mandatory chapter membership" obstacle in recruiting and retention, some will elect to go national, some will elect to go chapter, but both increase our membership rolls, our income and our clout, making NARFE's future more secure than if we continue with the status quo. Optional Chapter Membership is specifically designed to increase membership.

### **AUTHORIZATION FOR NEB TO ADJUST NATIONAL DUES WITHIN SPECIFIC LIMITS**

This resolution would authorize the NEB to adjust national dues within specific limits, with no more than a 10% increase in any 2-year period, and provide the NEB with the agility required to act as needed. Given the organization's concerning financial outlook, the NEB believes we cannot afford to wait two years to respond to problems or changed circumstances when and if they arise. Bear in mind that the NEB already approves and adjusts the budget, and has critical input from the financial staff at HQ. Dues account for over 60% of the revenues side of the budget. It's only logical that the board should have this authority between conventions than to become insolvent, due to a lack of liquid assets, while waiting for the next convention. There is nothing in the resolution that takes any authority for dues setting away from the delegates to the National Convention. The convention delegates retain the right to increase or decrease dues at National Conventions, including the right to reverse whatever action has been taken by the NEB between conventions.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF NARFE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION**

One major area of discussion during the NEB meeting was the establishment of an Executive Director (ED) position within NARFE. This is an issue that was initially suggested by the FON Committee and discussed further by the SPC and SPT. The hiring of an Executive Director is essential and long overdue. For years, we've been expecting the NARFE President to not only oversee the HQ staff, its programs and funding, but also conduct policy/planning work while serving as the voice and face of NARFE as well. We need to free up the President for policy/planning and ambassador functions, and hand the management of staff, programs and funds to a professional. Pages 30 and 31 of the plan enumerate the problems and how the hiring of an Executive Director would resolve them. The hiring of an Executive Director would be an investment that can be expected to pay dividends for a long time to come. A Federation President noted that he has worked with community service organizations that have Executive Directors. He said all work very effectively and have much better continuity in leadership than NARFE. An Executive Director with experience in the management of nonprofits can also be expected to have knowledge and skills in building membership.

During the NEB meeting, we were provided with a presentation from one recruiting firm about the process and cost of identifying candidates for the ED position. President Thissen has received a list of additional search firms. Since the NEB agrees that since all members in Chapters and

Federations should be kept apprised of the progress, further discussions at the National Convention were deemed to be unnecessary at this time, so the NEB proposal was withdrawn.

Prior to the National Convention, all delegates will receive the final copies of **ALL** Convention resolutions including those that the NEB agreed to as well as any other proposals from Chapters and Federations. I urge each delegate to discuss these proposals with those members for whom the delegate is casting a vote.

During the NEB meeting, the selection process for National Committee assignments was completed. These National Committees include Bylaws, Ballot & Teller, Credentials, Legislation, Membership, Resolutions, Rules, Secretary, Sergeant-At-Arms and Timekeeper. Each of these committees play an important role during the National Convention. As you may conclude from the information that I have given you today, the Bylaws and Resolutions Committees will play a major role this year. I am proud to announce that Region X is well represented with North Carolina Executive Vice President Robert Allen serving as the Chairman of the Bylaws Committee and Virginia Past President Richard Giangerelli assuming the Chairmanship of the Resolutions Committee. Congratulations to both of these excellent Region X Leaders.

I would also like to extend congratulations to the other members from Region X who were chosen to serve on National Committees:

Larry Minnear (Tennessee) – Sergeant-At-Arms

Pierce Johnson (Virginia) – Chair of Legislation

Connie Bails (Virginia) – Vice Chair of Timekeepers

Gaston Gianni (Virginia) – Bylaws

Betty Warren (Virginia) – Ballot and Tellers

Kathy Arpa (Virginia) – Membership

John Bails (Virginia) – Sergeant-At-Arms