

SarDeborah Wright
Florida Federation Legislative Chair
sardebrowright@gmail.com



CALL TO ACTION

The election has come and gone and only time will tell if the results help or hurt federal employees and retirees. Unfortunately, we can't wait to find out. We must act now. Inflation is out of control and many of us are living on a fixed income. There are so many issues that affect our lives, and we have work to do. Our outgoing National President Ken Thomas recently stated that prices for most goods and services remain stubbornly high, easily wiping away wage gains and making people feel poorer and upset about the economy overall. Brothers and Sisters, if you are waiting for someone to rescue you, it's going to be a long wait.

- In 2023, Social Security recipients will receive an estimated 8% increase, but health insurance premiums are expected to increase by 8%. In addition, Medicare Part B should decrease by five dollars.
- Florida Senator Rick Scott introduced the Federal Agency Sunset Commission Act in March 2021. If passed, this bill creates a review process to routinely evaluate federal agencies and associated laws to justify their existence. Among the federal laws to be reviewed is the Social Security Act, originally passed in 1935. Included in the current law is an entire section covering Medicare. This bill would allow Congress to "sunset" (eliminate) laws like the Social Security Act, after a five-year period or re-enact it on a yearly basis. If this bill passes, it will adversely affect over five million Floridians. It also fails to address a plan or program to replace it, that would protect those affected from severe economic hardship. The even bigger question is, what happens to the money that everyone has paid for Social Security for all those years?
- H.R. 82/ S. 1302, the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) has over 296 bipartisan sponsors and yet we still don't have a vote on this critical bill that would allow civil service employees to receive Social Security for themselves or to receive Social Security benefits from their spouses.
- The Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act of 2021 –(H.R. 5834), introduced by Representative Kevin Brady-Rep.- Texas, is the latest bill that seeks financial relief for

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more than 1.9 million Social Security beneficiaries affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

- The Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act, H.R. 6398/S. 3518, introduced by Rep. Gerry Connolly, Dem.-VA and Sen. Brian Schatz, Dem.-HI, proposes a 5.1 percent pay increase for federal employees, including a 4.1 percent across the board increase, plus a 1 percent average increase to locality pay in 2023. This increase falls in line with recent private-sector wage growth and the expected increase in military pay. It would also allow the federal government to better compete with the private sector to attract and retain a highly qualified, top-performing federal workforce and improve the morale of current employees.

In 1992, the mantra was “IT’S THE ECONOMY STUPID” and it remains so in 2022. No matter where you go, or who you talk to, it’s about the cost-of-living day to day. We have bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, but not in the Senate, which means we have work to do. We all need to participate in every election process, because we will be repeating this in 2024. I urge everyone to forget party lines and instead remember your way of life and your wallet. Consider your circumstances and the solutions offered by the people asking for your votes. Will their ideas help you and your family or hurt you? Your most important tool is your ballot, and you must use it to your advantage by making informed decisions in every election. Don’t listen to the rhetoric, look at the real picture.

Finally, our work didn’t end on November 8, 2022, it continues. We must continue to lobby our legislators to ensure that our needs are considered when bills are introduced in Congress. All too often, federal employees get the short end of the stick. But no longer because we are going to fight for our hard-earned rights! We need members to volunteer as Congressional and Senate District Leaders to make sure that our politicians are aware of our concerns. Make no mistake about it, this is a quid pro quo relationship, and we support those who support us! We must work together to improve our lives and the lives of our families. We must seize the opportunity to have our voices heard.

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As your Florida State Legislative Chair, I am determined to make sure that every legislator who represents federal active and retired employees knows exactly what we want. With your help, we are going to change the atmosphere and the attitude Congress has towards federal active and retired employees. There are 321,637 federal active and retired employees in Florida. We have the power and it's time to change things for the better.

Frederick Douglass said, "People might not get all they work for in this world, but they must certainly work for all they get." Let's get to work NARFE members, we got this!

In Solidarity,

SarDeborah Wright, NARFE Florida Legislative Chair

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