



NARFE

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

Official Quarterly Newsletter of the
Greater Houston Council of Chapters
October 2009

<http://www.narfehouston.org>



President: Dave Bloomer VP: vacant

Secretary: Hazel Hicks Treasurer: Wilbur Doehring

Senate Finance Bill Amendments Threaten FEHBP



During the week of September 21, the Senate Committee on Finance began considering over 500 amendments to their health care reform bill, including two which threaten the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP).

First, Ranking Committee member, Charles Grassley, R-IA, proposed that federal workers and Members of Congress be required to join state-based health exchanges to purchase health insurance instead of FEHBP. The amendment approved by the committee was changed to make enrollment in the exchanges **optional** – rather than mandatory – for federal employees and legislators. However, Senator Grassley's staff has said they still plan to push for the stronger language. The Grassley amendment would effectively end FEHBP and require federal workers to join the health exchanges. NARFE staff indicated federal employees worked too hard for FEHBP health benefits and we cannot allow them to be taken away this way.

Second, Senator Ron Wyden, D-OR, may offer an amendment which would open the FEHBP to certain low-income non-federal civilians. While NARFE supports access to comprehensive health care for all Americans, we insist that any proposal to open the FEHBP to the public must include separate risk pools, which the Wyden amendment does not contain. For that reason, NARFE opposes the amendment. Risk pools are used to calculate health plan premiums based on the cost of providing coverage to enrollees. Without the opportunity to study non-federal enrollees in a separate FEHBP risk pool, the introduction of any new community into the FEHBP could result in unanticipated premium increases.

Even if these amendments are not approved by the Finance Committee, we are concerned that they could be added to the legislation at another point in the process. For that reason, it is suggested that you use the text on NARFE's Legislative Action Center, <http://capwiz.com/narfe/issues/alert/?alertid=14103226> to urge your two Senators to oppose any amendment to health care reform legislation that would force federal workers and annuitants into the exchange system and/or would open FEHBP to non-federal civilians without a separate risk pool.

Although all Senators should be contacted, NARFE members who are represented by the following members of the Finance Committee should make an all-out effort to contact them since they continue to play a leading role in shaping the legislation: [Max Baucus](#), Montana, Chairman; [Jay Rockefeller](#), West Virginia; [Kent Conrad](#), North Dakota; [Jeff Bingaman](#), New Mexico; [John Kerry](#), Massachusetts; [Blanche Lincoln](#), Arkansas; [Ron Wyden](#), Oregon; [Charles Schumer](#), New York; [Debbie Stabenow](#), Michigan; [Maria Cantwell](#), Washington; [Bill Nelson](#), Florida; [Robert Menendez](#), New Jersey; [Thomas Carper](#), Delaware; [Chuck Grassley](#), Iowa, Ranking Member; [Orrin Hatch](#), Utah; [Olympia Snowe](#), Maine; [Jon Kyl](#), Arizona; [Jim Bunning](#), Kentucky; [Mike Crapo](#), Idaho; [Pat Roberts](#), Kansas; [John Ensign](#), Nevada; [Mike Enzi](#), Wyoming; and [John Cornyn](#), Texas.

Don't delay -- use the NARFE Legislative Action Center today to save your FEHBP benefits!

NARFE Websites:

<http://www.narfe.org> <http://www.txnarfe.org> <http://www.narfehouston.org>

Attention Chapter Presidents and Members District 7 & 8

The initial planning meeting for the 2011 Texas Federation Convention to be held in Galveston will be held November 18, 2009, at Ryan's Family Steakhouse, 7211 Hwy 6, in Houston (between Beechnut and Bellaire). The meeting will get underway at 1 P.M. Please plan to attend as NARFE needs your Chapter's help to make this event successful. A notice with additional information will also be sent to each chapter. Phil Kraus, Chapter #1375

Senator Hutchison Cosponsors Premium Conversion Bill

On September 8, 2009 Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison became a cosponsor of NARFE priority legislation called Premium Conversion. This legislation, S. 491 sponsored by Sen. Jim Webb, would allow civilian and military retirees to pay certain health care premiums on a pre-tax basis. On September 8, Sen. Webb added Sen. Hutchison as the 40th cosponsor. NARFE members are encouraged to use any of three paths to say thank you to Senator Hutchison for cosponsoring this legislation and asking that she follow through by voting for the legislation when it gets to the floor of the Senate.: **1)** the NARFE sponsored toll free number for the Capitol switchboard, 1-866-220-0044 (ask for your Senator by name), **2)** the NARFE Legislative Action Center , <http://capwiz.com/narfe/dbq/officials/> , or **3)** the Senate gateways to individual Members' "web forms" (www.senate.gov). If you do phone, e-mail or write your Senator, please let NARFE know using Chris Farrell's email address, which is: cfarrell@narfe.org Please place **HUTCHISON** in the Subject line of your message.

Update: Children's Age of Eligibility under FEHBP

Health Care Reform bills seem to have picked up on the age of eligibility for children under insurance coverage. It appears Health Care Reform bills actually go further than the NARFE legislative goal of age 25. The Senate HELP Committee bill would require that all individual and group market health insurance plans including those under the FEHBP offer dependent coverage for children up to age 26. Currently, most child dependents lose coverage by age 22. The NARFE Legislative Program supports legislation to provide that children of federal civilian and military members and retirees be permitted to remain under government-sponsored medical insurance plans until age 25 or the age generally allowed by larger medical insurers. Of course all proposed legislation is still subject to amendments prior to passage. We don't know yet what will eventually pass, but it is good to see this may well be a part of Health Care Reform that will improve coverage for children under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan.

National Dues Referendum Sent to Chapters

National President Margaret Baptiste has announced that the National Executive Board has proposed a referendum on a single dues structure for NARFE. Her memo forwards information on the referendum including a question and answer sheet. Chapter Presidents have been provided a copy of this material and will be making it available to chapter members. The information is also available on line and in the NARFE magazine. NARFE members should study this proposed referendum and discuss it with fellow members at upcoming Chapter meetings. The referendum was recently mailed to Chapter Secretaries and will be voted on at chapter meetings. The Chapter responses are due by December 8th. A single unified dues is said to offer advantages for stabilizing and simplifying the NARFE dues structure.

NARFE Websites:

<http://www.narfe.org> <http://www.txnarfe.org> <http://www.narfehouston.org>

Chapter News



Each Chapter President has been asked to have their Publicity Chair or Newsletter Editor contribute information on their Chapter two weeks before the beginning of each quarter. Each Chapter has also been advised to update their meeting and event information quarterly for the website. Was information submitted for your chapter?

Greater North Houston Chapter 828

At Chapter 828's October 20th meeting members will elect new officers for 2010.

At Chapter 828's November 17th meeting the 2010 Officers will be installed.

Chapter 828 will have a Christmas Party on December 7th at Noon It will be held at Spring Creek Barbeque, 25831 Northwest Freeway, Cypress Texas.

Northeast Houston Chapter 1349

Montgomery County Chapter 1350

Chapter 1350's annual picnic will be held October 8th the second Thursday of the month at Roy C. Burroughs Park, 9738 Hufsmith Road, Tomball, Texas 77375.

Chapter 1350 will hold its November meeting at the Incredible Pizza on I-45 and Loop 336 on November 12th. Kevin Martin, Financial Advisor will make a short presentation and other business will be election of Officers for 2010 and the chapter will also vote on the National Dues Referendum.

Chapter 1350's December 10th meeting will be the annual Christmas Party.

Southwest Houston Chapter 1375

The Chapter 1375 meeting on October 21st will feature a program on the Initial Plan for the 2011 Texas Federation Convention and voting on the National Dues Referendum.

The November 18th meeting of Chapter 1375 will include Election of Officers, Toys for Tots Donations, and following the meeting the first 2011 Texas Federation Convention Planning Meeting, with Houston Area Chapters invited.

The Chapter 1375 Christmas Party will be held December 16, 2009.

Rosenberg Chapter 2030

The September 9th Chapter 2030 meeting featured Jon and Evelyn Eiche speaking on Rotary International Efforts to Eliminate Polio. Due to low turnout the Dues Referendum issue has been deferred to the October Meeting and a vote will be taken at that meeting.

The October 14th Chapter #2030 meeting will feature David Gundrum speaking about Angel Food Ministries. A chapter vote on the Dues Referendum will be held at the October meeting.

At the November 9th Chapter 2030 meeting a representative of GEHA will make a presentation and include information on the upcoming open season.

The Chapter #2030 Annual Christmas Party and Installation of Officers for 2010 will be held on December 9^h at 11:30 AM at the Luby's Cafeteria in Rosenberg, Texas. The party will also feature musical entertainment by the barber shop quartet "Grandma's Boyfriends" and the traditional Chinese gift exchange.

NARFE Websites:

<http://www.narfe.org> <http://www.txnarfe.org> <http://www.narfehouston.org>

Agenda for GHC October Quarterly Meeting



The next Greater Houston Council of Chapters meeting will be on Wednesday October 28th at 10:30 AM at the Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, Texas. Agenda items for the meeting will include:

Update on 2011 TFC Convention Planning and future meetings
Report of Nomination Committee
Election of Officers for 2010-12

**NARFE Greater Houston Council of Chapters
C/O Dave Bloomer, President
1934 Mustang Springs Drive
Missouri City, Texas 77459**

To:

NARFE Websites:

<http://www.narfe.org>

<http://www.txnarfe.org>

<http://www.narfehouston.org>