

An Open Letter to a Member

From time to time, I receive messages from members who question the value of retaining their membership in NARFE and who wonder what the Association has done for them lately. I read these letters with a mixture of emotions, not the least of which is sadness. I cannot fathom why, at the very time our earned benefits are under assault, any member would ask this question. Please allow me to share with you a response I recently sent to just such a member.

Dear NARFE Member: The value of membership in our great Association rests with you, with me and with all members. I would observe, however, that if we all threw in the towel, NARFE, which for over 85 years has been the sole defender of the retirement benefits of federal retirees, would dissolve—and then where would we be?

Who would have been there in 2003, during the first session of the 108th Congress, when the House Budget Committee proposed that the Committee on Government Reform, which has oversight for our health care and annuity benefits, should cut \$38 billion over 10 years from the retirement benefits of federal retirees? NARFE called on our friend Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA), chairman of the latter committee, and other congressional friends who responded to our plea and joined the battle to turn this draconian measure aside.

Who would have stood up for federal retirees in 2004 when, in the second session of the 108th Congress, similar demands were made on this same committee? Once again, our con-

gressional friends responded to our entreaties and overrode those demands.

Who would have supported federal retirees in the fall of 2003 after the so-called Medicare prescription drug “improvement” legislation was passed that could have—and still might—cause total upheaval of our members’ earned FEHBP prescription drug benefits? Through NARFE’s efforts we have succeeded, thus far, in retaining our current prescription drug coverage, but the struggle isn’t over.

More importantly, who will be there this year to stand up for federal retirees when members of Congress, with their sharp knives, come after our annuities and our health insurance? Incidentally, a congressional work group is currently reviewing budget enforcement legislation that might place caps on entitlement spending (read federal retirees’ benefits) with a catastrophic price tag of \$127 billion over 10 years.

There is nothing sacrosanct about our current benefits. What the Congress has given, the Congress can take away. So you see, it’s not just a battle to get additional benefits for federal retirees. There is a much larger and infinitely more important struggle perpetually in progress, and the stakes involve our earned benefits. That battle is raging now and will continue its course into the foreseeable future, and no one can know or predict its outcome. Please keep in mind that for

every member who drops out of this Association, that critical struggle becomes increasingly more difficult for those who remain.

Thanks to the efforts of NARFE’s Legislative Department and our chapters with their political activist members, federal retirees have not lost any of their retirement benefits in many years. In

fact, NARFE’s long record of success in fending off legislative attacks on retiree benefits has created a false sense of security in the minds of scores of thousands of non-member retirees, who have been lulled into believing that their retirement benefits are safe from the ravages of inflation and congressional action. They couldn’t be more wrong!

Finally, despite many obstacles, we haven’t given up on getting our Premium Conversion legislation passed in this 109th Congress. Neither have we given up on the repeal of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. Despite the barrier of a near half-trillion dollar federal deficit, the struggle for our programs goes on. I would question why anyone would contemplate surrender. I hope these important facts will remind you what NARFE has done for you lately.



WITHOUT
NARFE, who
would stand
up for federal
retirees?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Fallis".

Charles L. Fallis
natpres@narfe.org