



San Fernando Valley Chapter 61

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Regular meetings are the first Wednesday of each month except June, July, and August

April 2025 Meeting, Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Meeting Location: Lulu's Restaurant

16900 Roscoe Blvd. Van Nuys, CA 91406

Please arrive at 11:30 am-- Meeting starts at Noon

Executive Board meeting at 10:30 am prior to the regular meeting.

President's Report by Charles Feistman

These days it is becoming very difficult to understand all of the political issues that are being thrown about.

There are still several executive orders being issued that is changing the face of the government and government employees. Many of these orders are now being challenged in court. Many of the orders have been halted or frozen by the court until they can be addressed by court order.

One of these executive orders, Birth Right Citizenship, the Trump administration is asking the Supreme court to intervene.

The Social Security Administration says Americans will no longer be able to change direct deposit and other banking information with the agency by phone, a practice it claims opens the door to fraud. "Approximately 40% of Social Security direct deposit fraud is associated with someone calling SSA to change direct deposit bank information. SSA's current protocol of simply asking identifying questions by telephone is no longer enough to prevent fraud," the agency stated late Wednesday.

Making changes to bank account information with SSA will now require recipients to use two-factor authentication with SSA's "my Social Security" service or by visiting a local Social Security office to prove their identity. All other SSA telephone services remain the same, according to the agency, which labeled as "inaccurate" reports that it planned to get rid of telephone services entirely.

The Washington Post had reported plans were in the works to end phone service for the millions of Americans filing retirement and disability claims as Elon Musk's DOGE cost-cutting team has targeted the agency for staff cuts of more than 12%.

The newspaper more recently reported that the SSA had dropped its plan to end the phone service, instead opting to go forward with a more limited portion of its initial proposal.

The agency's toll-free number has for decades served as the backbone for disabled and older Americans who don't have internet access or have trouble navigating the web to access earned government benefits.

SSA workers have in recent days warned that the Trump administration's plan to significantly downsize the agency could harm their ability to provide service to the millions of retirees, disabled people and others who rely on the program.

A federal judge on Thursday (March 13, 2025) ordered federal agencies to rehire tens of thousands of probationary employees who were fired amid President Donald Trump's turbulent effort to drastically shrink the federal bureaucracy.

U.S. District Judge William Alsup described the mass firings as a "sham" strategy by the government's central human resources office to sidestep legal requirements for reducing the

federal workforce. Alsup, a San Francisco-based appointee of President Bill Clinton, ordered the Defense, Treasury, Energy, Interior, Agriculture and Veterans Affairs departments to “immediately” offer all fired probationary employees their jobs back. The Office of Personnel Management, the judge said, had made an “unlawful” decision to terminate them.

And even if it is upheld on appeal, it does not guarantee that all the workers will be able to get their jobs back permanently: Alsup made clear that agencies still have the authority to implement “reductions in force,” as long as they follow the proper procedures for doing so. Federal agencies are currently finalizing “reduction in force” plans.

Alsup issued his ruling in a lawsuit brought by federal employee unions. He lashed out at the Justice Department over its handling of the case, saying he believes that Trump administration lawyers were hiding the facts about who directed the mass firings.

“You will not bring the people in here to be cross-examined. You’re afraid to do so because you know cross examination would reveal the truth,” the judge said to a DOJ attorney during a hearing Thursday. “I tend to doubt that you’re telling me the truth. ... I’m tired of seeing you stonewall on trying to get at the truth.”

Alsup also said the administration attempted to circumvent federal laws on reducing the workforce by attributing the firings to “performance” when that was not in fact the case. The judge called the move “a gimmick.” “It is sad, a sad day when our government would fire some good employee and say it was based on performance when they know good and well that’s a lie,” Alsup said.

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting. Please come and see us and your fellow members.

Our next meeting will be Noon, at Lulu’s restaurant on Wednesday April 2, 2025. We will start at noon so be early so you can order lunch.

Executive board will meet at 10:30 am.

SOS Report By Yoggi Riley

We are all at stake with the federal workforce I read the March issue of the NARFE magazine and thought it was one of the most informative copies printed in some time. It laid out in detail the positions pro and con of NARFE in light of the current administration in the white house and all his assistants which includes many cuts to the federal workforce. I would encourage you all to read again this article and stay aware of the doom and gloom we are all facing. Our one salvation may be the courts to stop the attempt to further cut jobs and our benefits. This is what happened with many workers that were terminated on the spot recently only to be reinstated back to work by the courts. It makes no difference at this point who you may have supported, we just need to stay aware and try to fight any cuts in our benefits. If it means picking up the phone call your legislator, then just let your voice be heard.

And the Post Office is also being targeted. In fact, as this newsletter goes to print, there are plans for demonstrations being planned at some post offices to inform the public of the need to protect and support the continued existence of the Post Office as it exists today. Don’t think if you are a postal retiree that it won’t affect you if the PO suffers losses of workers. I can’t stress enough how important it is to stay aware and react if necessary. If you decide to pick up the phone and call your legislator, don’t wait. Make the call.

Well, I must close for this month, as I had to get a new computer and I’ve already had to write my article twice. So until next month stay informed and be safe. Hope all those leprechauns were good to you.

Public Relations Report BY David Rittenberg

This article is based on an article by Michele Bollier, a retirement and benefits specialist with Retire Federal, in the March 2025 issue of NARFE Magazine.

OPM has an online system designed to report a death. This also involves completing a form as well as providing a copy of a death certificate, so this will eventually need to be done by mailing documents to OPM and the Office of Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI).

If your spouse predeceases you, you may need to report the death, request to increase your annuity back to the unreduced amount to eliminate the survivor benefit reduction and change your health insurance to self-only coverage. Survivors, family, or estate representatives are required to notify OPM as soon as possible following the death of an annuitant. Life events, such as marriage/divorce, death of spouse, or reemployment, can affect benefits and must be reported to OPM immediately.

All payments received from OPM after the annuitant's date of death must be returned to the Treasury Department.

OPM can be contacted by email at retire@opm.gov or by phone at (888) 767-6738--TTY: 1 (855) 887-4957. Hours of operation are 7:40 a.m. until 5 p.m. ET.

For further details on the procedures and the various website addresses and other contact information involved, I refer you to the March 2025 issue of NARFE Magazine, page 21.

Secretary's Report by Gregg Pericich

Happy Pills provides ways that will help you start feeling better today! Incorporating "happy pills" into your daily routine will spur you forward to begin living and enjoying life to the fullest. Some of my "happy pills" are reading the NARFE Magazine. Attending a NARFE Chapter Meeting. Eating Lunch at Lulu's. Planning an outing for me and a friend. Get out the Popcorn and watching a feel-good movie like "Sound of Music." So, read a good book, call a friend, and take advantage of all your NARFE member resources. And be Happy.

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