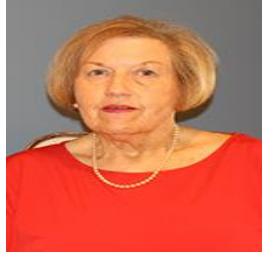


Region III Vice President Message



Lynn Harper

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

SPRING 2023

May 2, 2023

Good Evening,

It seems like only yesterday that I was installed as your Regional Vice President. These past four months, I have experienced a range of emotions from anxiety to enthusiasm and a lot in between. The mere fact that the National Executive Board (NEB) has six new board members – the National President and five Regional Vice Presidents – has generated “growing pains” as each of us tries to understand our roles and responsibilities as board members and to reshape our thought processes. As board members, we will be faced with the implications of continued membership decline, financial volatility caused by membership decline, and headquarters staffing vacancies. Your current NEB’s goal is to be an effective and cohesive board that works together to move NARFE forward. Based on my observations of the February 8-9, 2023, NEB Meeting and during visits to various federation events, written correspondence, and phone calls with members, it is evident that magnificent work is being done. However, there is work yet to be done. Never fear, I am optimistic about NARFE’s future.

I put a “few miles” on my vehicle during March and April. I attended and did presentations at NARFE Florida’s District 2 Conference in Orange Park, FL; then on to the South Carolina Federation Conference in Summerville, SC. After a very brief respite at home, I embarked on my journey to the Alabama Federation Conference in Prattville, AL and then traveled up to Lake Tiak O’Khata in Louisville, MS for the Mississippi Federation Conference. The SC, AL, and MS conferences were their first in-person conferences since the pandemic. Members were so glad to meet in-person and just to be able to hug or shake hands with their fellow NARFE members. That same esprit de corps was apparent at the Florida District Conference. A shoutout to District 2 for recruiting eight new members at that meeting! I will be attending the GA Federation Biennial Conference in Warner Robins on June 6, followed by the NARFE Florida Federation Conference in October and the Puerto Rica Federation Conference later in the year. Staying connected with our federations is one of my goals.

To transform or not to transform is the dilemma NARFE is facing. It is a situation which must be addressed sooner rather than later if NARFE is to remain a viable organization that protects our health and pay benefits. That is something NARFE has been doing for 102 years. Every day we have a chance to make the organization stronger; but accomplishing that feat requires an evaluation of the current situation to see what aspects we can improve on or change. “Lip-service” will not create lasting change; instead, NARFE must be willing to **transform** itself. We must drastically slow down the membership decline. We must **change!** Change is the

only constant in life. Further, progress is impossible without **change**. According to Seth Godin, “*Either you defend the status quo, or you invent the future.*” The status quo is no longer an acceptable option for NARFE; we must invent the future.

As of April 27, 2023, membership was at an all-time low of **139,962** members (74,249 National Only Members (NOM) and 65,713 Chapter members). As of April 27th, Region III had **17,609** members (9,089 NOMs and 8,520 Chapter members). Compare that to 300,000 members in 2012. NARFE’s membership decline is a double-edged sword because it impacts NARFE’s operating revenue and its legislative advocacy. Remember, over 62% of NARFE’s operating revenue comes from membership dues. There is **strength in numbers!** So as membership declines, our legislative successes could suffer. That is not what we need now with our benefits being under attack due to the debt ceiling fiasco.

We must focus on a **Bold** new methodology. We must transform and we must start that transformation **NOW!** We must reinvent how NARFE does business; we must change NARFE’s DNA and develop an entirely new and different business model or even a new governance structure. NARFE must reinvent itself, not on paper, but in **action**. We do not want NARFE to have the same end result as Eastman Kodak, Polaroid, Sears, Bed, Bath and Beyond, etc. because we failed to change with the times.

The NARFE Membership Advisory Committee, of which I serve as Chair, is actively exploring avenues to increase membership. We will be working closely with NARFE’s new Director, Member Engagement, Nora McDonald, and her staff on ways to increase membership. Some of the actions being explored are: get on the GSA Schedule to afford NARFE the opportunity to conduct Retirement Seminars; revise the Membership Renewal Forms; promote payment of membership dues via credit card; develop membership incentives for retention and new incentives for recruiting; participate in trade expos/conventions of other federal groups; promote what has NARFE done for you and what it continues to do; better promote the importance of NARFE membership; provide federations and chapters recruiting videos; and a host of other ideas. Bottom line, we all must be flexible, open, and willing to adapt. I encourage you to ask me questions and to share your ideas with me.

A great big **THANKS** to each of you, especially during **Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW)** May 7-13, 2023. PSRW is dedicated to honoring the individuals who serve our great nation as public servants in federal, state, and local governments. Public servants do important work that positively affects all of us every day. Public servants help to make America better, safe, and stronger. Thanks for what you do. You are the best!

Sincerely,

Lynn Harper

Region III Vice President

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