

John Szpyhulsky, Action Planning

Summary — Action Planning and Hopes for NARFE's Future

The session focused on turning the conference's ideas into **specific action plans with accountability**, rather than leaving with only notes. Presidents were asked to identify two or three priorities, define the steps needed to accomplish them, assign responsibility, and commit to following through.

Major Action Plans Identified

- **Increase chapter visits and communication**
 - Presidents emphasized regularly visiting chapters and maintaining spreadsheets to track visits, meetings, topics discussed, and follow-up.
 - Chapters want more direct information about NARFE activities, legislation, headquarters decisions, and organizational issues.
 - Several presidents committed to assigning board members to chapters when visiting every chapter is impractical.
- **Improve chapter health**
 - One president proposed an annual **Chapter Health Assessment** to evaluate each chapter's condition and identify trends.
 - Area vice presidents would work with chapter presidents to complete assessments and report the results to the Federation board.
- **Build a leadership pipeline**
 - Presidents discussed identifying promising members and intentionally developing them into future leaders.
 - Ideas included leadership training, officer workshops, mentoring, and giving members practical opportunities to become involved.
- **Strengthen legislative advocacy**
 - A major priority was expanding and revitalizing **Congressional District Leader (CDL)** and legislative programs.
 - Presidents want stronger tracking of congressional contacts and better coordination with headquarters.
 - Several participants argued that Federation-level legislative leaders should be able to communicate with their entire congressional delegation, not only members representing their own districts.
- **Improve membership recruitment and retention**
 - Presidents expressed concern about members being dropped because chapters fail to follow up on unpaid renewals.
 - Chapters need better systems for contacting members before they lapse.
 - One ambitious goal was for **every member to recruit at least one new member**, potentially doubling membership.
- **Engage younger and active federal employees**
 - Ideas included evening meetings, programs designed for active employees, leadership development, and recruiting younger members.
 - One participant proposed recruiting **five younger members per chapter** as a specific goal.

- **Strengthen member services**
 - The importance of the Services Officer program was highlighted, particularly helping surviving spouses and families navigate federal benefits and OPM processes.
- **Improve conferences and training**
 - Suggestions included more hands-on workshops, topics relevant to active employees, potentially extending conferences to two days, and using matching funds for outreach and advertising.
 - One president wanted clearer **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** defining officers' responsibilities.
- **Encourage Federation collaboration**
 - Participants suggested joint conferences between neighboring states to reduce costs and increase cooperation and camaraderie.
 - Sharing successful practices rather than each Federation "reinventing the wheel" was encouraged.
- **Improve internal communication and transparency**
 - Several participants expressed frustration with communication barriers between headquarters, Federations, and chapters.
 - There were calls for more direct communication, greater transparency, and easier access to organizational information.
 - One participant strongly argued that headquarters should better support Federations rather than creating additional administrative burdens.

Specific Examples of Commitments

Participants described plans such as:

- Visiting every chapter and documenting the visits.
- Establishing CDL programs in every legislative district.
- Recruiting and training future leaders.
- Improving first-year member engagement.
- Ensuring chapters understand their responsibilities for life-member chapter dues.
- Reviewing chapter finances, bylaws, vacancies, and operations.
- Aligning chapters with newly redrawn congressional districts.
- Contacting candidates in competitive or open congressional races.
- Creating stronger communication and relationship-building among officers.
- Bringing dormant or unaffiliated chapters back into the NARFE family.

Hopes for NARFE's Future

The final discussion asked each participant to identify **one wish for the future of NARFE**.

Several themes emerged:

1. **A stronger membership and retention program**, including a Federation-level membership committee that works directly with chapters.
2. **A CDL in every congressional district** to strengthen grassroots advocacy and connect chapters and national-only members with their representatives.
3. **A stronger leadership pipeline** so the organization continually develops new leaders.
4. **More younger members** and greater engagement of active federal employees.

5. **Stronger cooperation between Federations and chapters**, including joint conferences and shared resources.
6. **Better communication from headquarters** and fewer barriers to getting information to chapters and members.
7. **Greater transparency and trust** in organizational decision-making.
8. **A willingness to change traditional practices** rather than continuing to repeat approaches that are not producing results.

Overall Message

The strongest message of the session was: **the conference should produce action, not just information.** Participants were challenged to leave with written commitments, specific steps, and accountability—and to report back on their progress at the next presidents' meeting.

The closing theme was essentially: **NARFE's future depends on changing what is not working, strengthening membership and retention, developing new leaders, improving communication, and putting conference ideas into practice.**