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**1. Happy New Year from OPM (and of course, FEA-R).** The Office of Personnel Management informed Federal retirees that starting January 1, FERS retirees would receive a 4.9% cost of living increase, and CSRS retirees would receive a 5.9% increase. The Social Security Administration had also announced an increase of 5.9% for social security recipients. These increases are tied to the Department of Labor Consumer Price Index (CPI-W). The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B enrollees will be \$170.10 for 2022, an increase of \$21.60 from 2021. The annual deductible for all Medicare Part B beneficiaries is \$233 in 2022, an increase of \$30 from 2021.

**2. Are monthly annuity payments to federal retirees affected if there is a government shutdown?** As Congress continues to “kick the can down the road” on a funding the federal government, members are concerned if this will affect their monthly annuity. According to the “National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association--NARFE” (December, 2021), “During a government shutdown, federal retirees under the CSRS and FERS retirement system still receive their scheduled annuity payments on the first business day of the month. A shutdown does not prevent monthly annuity payments from being made.”

**3. NEA President, Becky Pringle, in the New York Times Spotlight.** The New York Times ran an article (December 12, 2021) highlighting the work of NEA and its President, Becky Pringle. It emphasized the work that was done during the COVID crisis to keep employees and students safe. It showcased the work on social justice including the recently published “NEA Racial Justice in Education Resource Guide,” a tool for educators. This article also detailed President Pringle’s personal struggles that shaped her leadership. Read more at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/us/politics/teachers-union-becky-pringle.html>

**4. A FREE Mental Health Service for NEA Members.** NEA-Member Benefits has recently offered a new program to help NEA members deal with the increased stresses and pressures facing us every day. This program, Sanvello, is at no cost to NEA members. (Upgrades to the programs are available, and can be tried on a trial basis for free.) The basic program offers a virtual program that can be access through one’s computer or phone. It provides a myriad of tools such as relaxation techniques, guided meditation, goal setting, virtual encouragement, and much more. To learn more, or sign up for this program, visit [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com) After logging in, click on “Benefits” in the top banner, and then on “Mental Health and Wellness” under Everyday Savings.

**5. How to Lobby Effectively to Repeal GPO/WEP.** Last month, we mentioned 3 bills currently in Congress that address the repeal of Government Pension Offset/Windfall Elimination Provision, that negatively impacts many of our retirees. Sending letters through [www.EducationVotes.nea.org](http://www.EducationVotes.nea.org) is one way to lobby. NARFE has offered three additional tips for effective lobbying:

- Instead of only mentioning the negative impact of GPO/WEP, consider clearly stating what you want the legislator to do. For example, say, “WEP has reduced my ability to cover certain expenses so I hope you will co-sponsor (support/vote for) the Social Security 2100 Act.” This puts the emphasis on the legislator to take action, as opposed to merely listening.
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- Before reaching out to your representative, find out what issues s/he really cares about. Find out what bills s/he has introduced, her/his committee assignments, and press releases. See if you can tie in a relationship for your concerns to the type of bills s/he has supported in the past.
- Find out which staff members handles federal retirement issues. Call your representative's office and ask to speak to that staff member directly. A good relationship with this important resource is a great way to lobby.

**6. NEA Retired Conference 2022.** NEA will be offering their annual Retired Conference, again this year, IN PERSON. The Conference will take place March 16-18, 2022, in Baltimore, MD. The registration fee is \$90 (nonrefundable). The fee will cover conference materials along with provided meals and refreshment breaks. This year's Retired Conference will provide participants a venue to enhance leadership skills, strengthen affiliates, and strategize on ways to engage retired members in promoting the goals and mission of NEA. Registration will not be open until January 5, 2022. For more information on the conference and how to register visit: [www.nea.org/retired](http://www.nea.org/retired)

**7. Money Smart for Older Adults.** The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection has developed a program for helping older adults manage their financial resources. The Money Smart for Older Adults Program raises awareness among older adults and their caregivers. It is design to prevent elder financial exploitation and encourages advance planning and informed financial decision-making. For more information on this program visit: <https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/teach-money-smart/money-smart-for-older-adults.html>

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