

GSRA 2018 ACTION ALERT 6 – YOUR COLA
OPPOSE HB 903 AND
REQUEST HOUSE RETIREMENT COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT COLA

HB BILL 903 was introduced Monday afternoon by Representative Howard Maxwell from Dallas. Although it affects only TRS members, GSRA members should oppose it if for no other reason than it can easily be amended now or passed in the future to affect us too.

The bill in effect repeals provisions in the TRS statute to prohibit COLAs to all individuals who first became TRS members on or after July 1, 1993 unless "... (1) The annual required employer contribution for the preceding fiscal year was less than \$150 million; and (2) the employee contribution rate is established by the board at 6 percent." In effect this will discontinue COLAs for some TRS retirees next year and for progressively more retirees in years to come.

You might wonder why we should care about our brothers and sisters in TRS with all the COLAs they have received while we have received none. That's a legitimate question. There are three VERY good reasons for you to act NOW on this as suggested below: (1) As stated in the first paragraph, HB 903 can easily be amended now or passed in the future to affect us ERS retirees too. (2) GSRA has many members who belong to TRS and we want to support them. (3) TRS organizations have come to realize they made a mistake not supporting us many years ago to oppose GSEPS and alternative investments and have become convinced that whatever legislation affects one of the retirement systems can be used as a wedge to affect the other. The TRS organizations are now our good friends. They have worked closely with us on health insurance, balance billing, "tax reform" and other issues in recent years **AND**, they have begun this session to support us receiving a COLA.

What you as a ERS retiree and GSRA member should do now:

You should **use the attached template to write all members of the House Retirement Committee** and ask them to **oppose HB 903**. You should also request these members to request the House Appropriations Committee to appropriate **funds for at least a 1% raise for current state employees and at least a 1% cost of living increase for state retirees be included in the House version of the FY 2019 state budget.**

You should send this message **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**. It is not necessary or desirable to include the above background information. If after you send your email you have the time to call your representative and express your thoughts, that will be good too. Remember, be **courteous and respectful**. You must write your legislators **today and throughout the session** so that the legislators never doubt that large numbers of voters care about our issues in this election year. **IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN? IF NOT YOU, THEN WHO?**

