

GSRA Pres-Elect Beverly Littlefield, GSRA Pres. Jim Sommerfield, Gov. Brian Kemp, GSRA Legislative Comm. Chair Chuck Freedman, and GSRA Legislative Liaison Chuck Clay

GSRA Meets with Governor Kemp



On April 28, four GSRA representatives were escorted into Governor Kemp's office for what we thought was a meeting with staff members to discuss our HB 173. Instead, we were greeted by the Governor himself, as well as two key staff, and we began an earnest discussion of how we could work together to achieve our well-deserved and needed COLA for state retirees. GSRA attendees were President Jim Sommerville, President-elect Beverly Littlefield, Legislative Committee Chair Chuck Freedman, and Legislative Liaison Chuck Clay. Also attending were the Governor's Executive Counsel David Dove and his policy advisor for retirement systems, Blake Raulerson.

HB 173 is the especially important bill that provides an avenue for GSRA to submit candidates for consideration by the Board of Trustees of the Employees Retirement System when they are filling certain board position vacancies. We thought HB 173 was the purpose of the meeting based on Mr. Raulerson's invitation to us for the meeting, and it did eventually get discussed once we raised the subject at the end of the meeting.

This was the first time that the Governor's Office has initiated a request for a meeting with GSRA representatives. So, this is another sign of GSRA's increased visibility, influence, and respect among the leaders of state government.

We had a very productive meeting with Governor Kemp, in which we discussed at length the issue of COLAs. It was a very frank and open discussion. Governor Kemp asked that we send him our proposals on restoring COLAs in a financially sound manner. He indicated that he would have the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) evaluate our proposals. We are very pleased that he is willing to commit the resources of OPB to examine the options for

COLA restoration.

Raulerson indicated that he would set up a meeting this summer with his office, OPB, and GSRA to discuss COLAs. This is an important development in that we will be able to provide input during the period when the Governor's Office is beginning to prepare the proposed budget for FY'23.

So, although this is far from reaching a solution to our issue, we wanted to share the events of the day with our members, to keep you apprised of the promising conversation we had with the Governor and his staff. Stay tuned!

