



Newsletter

Vol. 20, Number 6

www.MyGSRA.com

July 2026

Lt. Governor Candidate Josh McLaurin Meets with GSRA to Discuss Our Legislative Goals

By Chuck Freedman

The following was posted on Facebook on July 24th: GSRA also contacted the Republican Lt Governor Candidate, and as we prepare to publish this month's newsletter, we await his response..

On July 22, GSRA Vice President Robert Riddle and Legislative Liaison Chuck Freedman met with Democratic Candidate for Lt. Governor, State Senator Josh McLaurin. The meeting, in Senator McLaurin's downtown Atlanta campaign office, lasted over an hour.

Senator McLaurin has been a long-time supporter of retired state employees. As a member of the Senate Retirement Committee, he took an active role in helping pass Senator Nan Orrock's SB 339 out of committee. As a reminder, SB 339 would have mandated annual 3% COLAs except under extreme revenue droughts.

Senator McLaurin said that he supports our following goals and will work toward achieving them:

- Amending the FY 2027 Appropriations Act to reinstate the legislatively enacted increase of 2.92% in the annual Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution/ADEC (annual \$100 million [\$64 million in state funds]) for cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs).
- Funding a 3% COLA for FY 2028 and beyond by allocating upwards of an additional \$300 million (totaling \$450 million, that includes the annual \$150 million already in the ADEC by Governor Kemp), and including this amount in future ADECs. We all acknowledged that this might take longer than next session, but the key is the appropriation of additional COLA funds every year until the requisite amount is achieved in subsequent ADECs.
- Mandating that ALL funds appropriated for COLAs are distributed as COLAs as soon as administratively feasible within the fiscal year for which they are appropriated. This will include:
 - Supporting the drafting and passage of a bill to accomplish this.
 - Working with the ERS Board of Trustees to advocate that ERS modify its policies and formula for determining the annual amounts of COLAs. Intended outcome is that ALL funds appropriated for COLAs are distributed as COLAs to members.
- Amending O.C.G.A. 47-2-21(a)(4) to provide for GSRA to nominate candidates for the ERS board position specifically designated to be appointed by the Governor, effective with appointments to be made for the FY2028 Board term.

- Continuing to advocate for any state tax reform initiatives that maintain the existing exemptions for all seniors' income and mitigate further erosion of the purchasing power of retirees and other middle- and low-income Georgians. Reforms must not hinder the State's ability to provide adequate essential services and to meet its financial responsibilities and obligations to citizens.

The meeting was very encouraging for additional positive outcomes for retirees.



Figure 1: Senator McLaurin met with GSRA to discuss our important goals.

Senator McLaurin commented on GSRA's post with the following:

"Hi all: just wanted to post here to say thanks to Chuck and Robert for their time and I'm proud to stand with retirees on these issues. In general, current state leadership operates according to a starvation budget where they'd rather send back billions of dollars than meet our basic obligations to retirees and others. I sat in Senate Retirement committee during legislative session and heard the compelling stories of retirees who described how they took the state job - despite lower income - because they were promised stable and fulsome benefits. I think it's shameful the state hasn't kept those promises, including the recent budget disregard by Governor Kemp. I look forward to working with retirees to right these wrongs starting in 2027."



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COLA / Post-Retirement Benefit Adjustment Starting This Month

By Dan Coffee

As a reminder, in April the ERS Board of Trustees approved a 2.25% monthly cost of living adjustment (COLA) for retirees and beneficiaries effective July 1st that will be reflected in the July monthly benefit payment payable at the end of this month on Friday, July 31st. This COLA adjustment to each one's base benefit will be payable for life. (GSEPS retirees with a membership date on or after 07/01/2009 are excluded since this group is specifically excluded by statute from receiving post-retirement adjustment payments.)

To be eligible for the July 2026 COLA one must have retired on or before July 1st, 2025. See the ERS website at www.ers.ga.gov for additional information and stipulations.

Will the Candidates Show?

By Allan Hill

Now that the primaries are over, the GSRA Legislative Team has been in touch with the four major candidates for State-wide office and has invited each of them to address our members at the Annual Meeting on October 5-6, 2026. GSRA has invited Gubernatorial candidates (in alphabetical order) Keisha Lance Bottoms and Rick Jackson, and Lt. Gubernatorial candidates Greg Dolezal and Josh McLaurin. Our schedule must remain flexible as we work with the candidates' campaign schedules, but the invitation sent was for 30 minutes each. The Opening Session will start at 12:15, with the candidates scheduled to speak from 12:30 to 2:30. If a candidate cannot appear in person, they will (hopefully) provide a video we can show to the members. The invitation included a specific list of issues and concerns of GSRA which we asked them to address.

This election is going to be very close, which makes our votes more important than ever. Six-thousand votes can win or lose an election. We'll see which of them show up. I know we'll show up!



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Great Strength, Responsible Advocacy

GSRA Annual Meeting: October 5-6, 2026

Robert F Hatcher Sr. Conference Center

We have some very exciting and informative workshops lined up for this year's meeting. Two of the workshops from last year were so popular and well-received that we've brought them back, along with three others. Each attendee will choose two workshops. They are:

Think Before You Click - *AI, Online Safety, and Protecting Yourself in a Changing Digital World*, with Dr. Alan Stines and Professor. Tina Ashford of MGA.

Crime and Personal Safety – *Protecting Yourself in the Real World*, with retired GBI agent Keith Golden.

Legal/Financial Affairs - *Wills, Trusts, Advance Directives and Estate Planning*, with Kim Stroup, attorney with the Law Offices of James Bates Bannon Grover.

Breast Cancer/Prostate Cancer – *Signs, Symptoms and Treatment; What You Need to Know*, with Christian Sorensen and Dionne Spears of Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

AMBA – *Discounts Through Passport; So Many Ways to Save*, AMBA.

We will meet at the Robert F. Hatcher Center in Macon again this year. We will gather at the venue at Middle Georgia State University on Monday and Tuesday, October 5-6, 2026, with the opening session beginning at 12:15 on Monday. We will adjourn at 2:30 on Tuesday. We'll have a hot buffet lunch, and updates from SHBP and ERS. We'll have a Monday afternoon reception with hors d'oeuvres, music, and a cash bar with beer, wine, and music. Workshops are scheduled for Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning.

Registration for this year's meeting will be \$40 (\$50 for late registration), which includes the opening reception (with a cash bar) and a buffet lunch on Tuesday. The registration form at the end of the newsletter can be printed and mailed or here's the link for the Annual Meeting registration:

<https://gsra.memberclicks.net/2026-annual-meeting-registration#/>

Each registrant shall pick two workshops to attend.

Mark your calendars for October 5-6, 2026, at the Robert F. Hatcher Center on the campus of Middle Georgia State University. We are excited for what will be another fun, successful Annual Meeting. Come join us and celebrate our strength and successful advocacy. See you there!



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This year, GSRA has contracted with the two hotels at the I-475/Hwy 80 (Eisenhower Parkway) exit for special rates.

Hotel	Negotiated Rates	Contact Information
Holiday Inn Express & Suites– I-475 4970 Harrison Rd. Macon, GA, 31206	\$129.00 a night for a 2 Queen Standard or a 1 King Standard, \$154 for a 2 Queen Suite (taxes are extra)	Click her for the GSRA rate: https://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/find-hotels/select-roomrate?fromRedirect=true&qSrt=sBR&qSIH=MCNEP&qRms=1&qAdlt=1&qCiD=4&qCiMy=092026&qCoD=7&qCoMy=092026&qGrpCd=ML9&setPMCookies=true&qSHBrC=EX&qDest=4970%20Harrison%20Rd,%20Macon,%20GA,%20US&showApp=true&adjustMonth=false&srb_u=1&qRmFtr= Hotel front desk at 478/803-0033 but if you call please ask for the GSRA group rate.
Comfort Inn and Suites Hotel 5000 Harrison Rd, Macon, 31206	\$109 for 2 Queen beds or 1 King bed (taxes are extra)	Click here for the GSRA rate: https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/ht11m2?checkInDate=2026-10-04&checkOutDate=2026-10-06&ratePlanCode=BYIPGW . The group's name is GSRA Conference Group, and the group # is BYIPGW.

Note: By going directly to the hotel's websites, it is possible one can get a cheaper rate than what's being offered to GSRA if there is availability. As of July 27, the website for HEI shows rooms beginning at \$121 a night; the website for the Comfort Inn and Suites shows rooms beginning at \$69 a night. There are a limited number of those rooms at both hotels.

There are several other hotels at that exit, including:

The Hampton Inn (<https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/rooms/?ctyhocn=MCNEPHX&arrivalDate=2026-10-04&departureDate=2026-10-06&room1NumAdults=1>) showing rooms for \$150 a night at the time reviewed.

The LaQuinta (https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/laquinta/macon-georgia/la-quinta-macon-west/rooms-rates?brand_id=LQ&checkInDate=10/4/2026&checkOutDate=10/5/2026&useWRPoints=false&children=0&adults=1&rooms=1&loc=ChIJDeOBiEv484gRoas_8Tx9se4&sessionId=1781552660) at \$108 a night at the time reviewed.

AMBA/GSRA Webinars

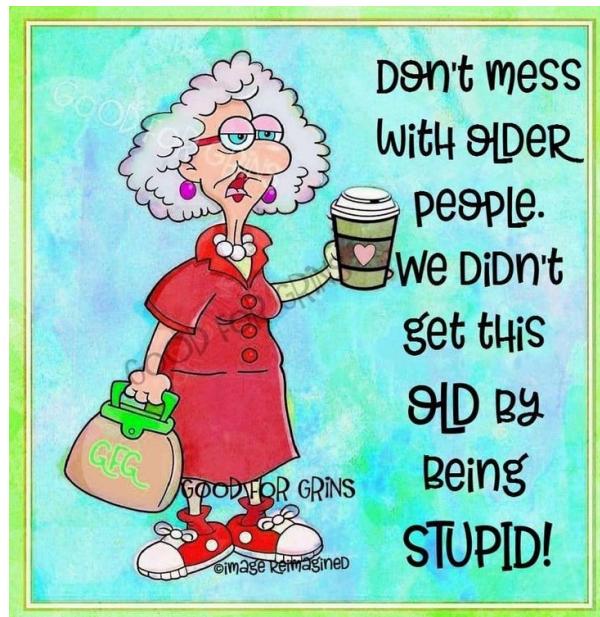
By Allan Hill

GSRA and AMBA offer monthly webinars that provide members with a wide range of important information, including financial, health, travel, recreational, lifestyle, and safety topics. The webinars are held on the third Wednesday of every month at 10:00 A.M., except in December, when it's the first Wednesday. All webinars are free to join, but registration is required.

Join us for the next webinar on August 19, 2026, for a timely topic, "Senior Scams and Election Season Fraud," with your host Jon Green of AMBA. All members will receive an email from "GSRA Webinar" in early July with details and instructions on registering.

Looking ahead, the September 16, 2026, webinar will be "Life Insurance Basics for Retirees."

If you've missed any of the previous webinars, you can find recordings of all of them on the GSRA homepage at www.mygsra.com. See you at 10:00 on August 19th!



From the Banks of the Chattahoochee River

By Judy Bryson

Hello GSRA Members,

Those sweltering summer days are here! I hope you are finding a little time to enjoy the season, whether that means taking a vacation, gathering with family, or simply finding the coolest place possible to dodge the heat. Even with all that going on, I want you to know that GSRA is still at work for you.

Over the summer, we have been meeting with candidates for governor and lieutenant governor to make sure they hear directly from us about what retirees need. One of our top priorities is educating them on the importance of guaranteeing COLAs in the future. These conversations are important because the decisions made by elected leaders can have a real impact on our retirement security.

We are also busy planning our annual conference for this fall, and we want it to be a good one. We are working to make sure candidates are there, that members have the chance to hear from them, and that the workshops are useful, worthwhile, and relevant. This year's theme is **Great Strength, Responsible Advocacy**, and that says a lot about who we are and how we continue to stand together.

And here is some good news worth repeating: the 2.25% COLA will be included in this month's pension payment this very week. We are certainly proud of that accomplishment, and I know many of you are glad to see it show up in your payment.

We have also written to the ERS Board on your behalf asking that what is commonly known as the "13th check" be paid to retirees as soon as possible. We are hopeful the ERS Board will take action on that request at its August meeting.

As always, thank you for your membership, your support, and your trust. We will keep showing up, speaking out, and working hard to make sure GSRA keeps working for you.

Take care,



Local GSRA Chapter News

Southwest Georgia Chapter

The GSRA Southwest Georgia chapter met on July 15th at Albany State University's West campus.



Figure 2: Southwest Georgia Chapter enjoyed their July 2026 Chapter meeting.

Our program presenter was Jim Sommerville, former GSRA State President. Jim retired in 2010 after 34 years with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

Jim reviewed GSRA's previous planning efforts and GSRA's most recent strategic plan. He discussed how GSRA has achieved several of the objectives listed in the original plan. He next discussed the GSRA Board Planning Retreat held in Macon on June 9th. He shared the two critical and interdependent issues discussed at length by the Board:

- Protect and advocate for retiree benefits.
- Grow the organization's impact through strong membership and participation.

Jim finished his presentation responding to questions from the chapter members.

Our next chapter meeting is planned for Oct 14, 2026.



Figure 3: Former GSRA President Jim Sommerville.

ABC of Douglas Chapter

ABC of Douglas Chapter of GSRA met on 07/20/2026 at the Covered Wagon in Douglas, Georgia. Guest speaker was Melissa Fletcher with Silver Sneakers from the Wellness Center. She discussed the importance of movement, balance, risks of falling, and staying hydrated. She advised of the activities offered at the Wellness Center. And we thanked her for offering day passes to the Wellness Center and giving away a one-month pass to Annie McIver.

Coosa Valley Chapter

The Coosa Valley Chapter held its quarterly meeting on July 21st in Rome. There were 15 members in attendance including one new member. Rob Gross, Chapter President, presided over the meeting.

The guest speaker was Taylor Payton, Director of Business Development, for Senior Helpers. Senior Helpers provides dependable, non-medical in-home care that helps seniors live safely, independently, and comfortably at home. This goal is achieved by providing a wide range of services for a 14-county area in northwest Georgia. The family of one of the Chapter members has received assistance from this group and recommends them highly.



Figure 4: Taylor Payton provided an informative presentation of the services provided by Senior Helpers.

Jan Hardeman, Outreach Coordinator, sent 10 postcards April through June recruiting new retirees in our area. She has sent 24 postcards to date for 2026.

Marlene Autry, GSRA Board Member, provided an update on various types of retirement plans available to current employees. She also discussed the work required to make the upcoming COLA raise and bonus a possibility.

Rob Gross, President of the Chapter, encouraged everyone to attend the Annual Meeting in October. The members agreed to purchase gift cards again for door prizes from the Chapter. Cards are funded by member donations. Last year we donated two \$200 VISA gifts cards and expect to at least match this donation again this year. The next meeting for the Chapter is scheduled for 10/20/2026.

Tri-County Chapter

The Tri-County Chapter held its third quarterly meeting of 2026 on July 27th at Doodlum's Barbecue & Fruit Stand in Woodbury with thirty-three (33) members in attendance. Joy Evans, Chapter President, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation. GSRA activities including plans for the Annual Meeting were shared with the group.



Figure 5: Tri-County Chapter members enjoyed an informative meeting followed by lunch.

Dan Coffee provided an update on the Legislative Team's outreach to the candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor to help educate Georgia's next leaders on our issues.



Figure 6: Dan Coffee spoke about inviting candidates to the Annual Meeting.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and social time together. The next chapter meeting is planned for Monday, October 26th at 11:30 AM back at Doodlum's Barbecue Restaurant in Woodbury.



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June 2026 New GSRA Members, Welcome!

Name	County	Name	County
Janet Fasick	Muscogee	Katrina Harrison	Irwin
Jimmy Howard	Bibb	Frances Jones	Monroe
Ranita Keener	Richmond	Marsha Lane	Clayton
John Norfleet, III	Jones	Rhod Page	Bibb
William Parsons	Banks	Allen Rowand	Bullock
Sylvia Singleton	Chatham	Linda Tutchter	Twiggs
Rose Wimberly	Bibb	Kimberly Yawn	Henry

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GEORGIA STATE RETIREES ASSOCIATION

GSRA 2026 ANNUAL MEETING-OCTOBER 5th-6th, 2026

"*Great Strength, Responsible Advocacy*"

**Robert F Hatcher Jr. Conference Center on the campus of Middle Georgia State in
Macon, GA**

REGISTRATION – COMPLETE ONE PER PERSON – GSRA MEMBERS CAN LOG IN AND REGISTER ONLINE AT
WWW.MYGSRA.COM WITH CREDIT CARD UNTIL 9-04-26 – NON MEMBERS PLEASE COMPLETE AND MAIL THIS FORM

Early Registration Received by 9/04/2026: \$40 After 9/04/26 & On-site Registration: \$50

Name:

Phone:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Email Address:

GSRA Chapter:

PLEASE PICK TWO (2) WORKSHOPS TO ATTEND – Click or Circle Your Top 2 CHOICES:

A – **Crime and Personal Safety** – *Protecting Yourself in the Real World*

B – **Think Before You Click** - *AI, Online Safety, and Protecting Yourself in a Changing Digital World*

C – **Legal/Financial Affairs** - *Wills, Trusts, Advance Directives and Estate Planning*

D – **Breast Cancer/Prostate Cancer** – *Signs, Symptoms and Treatment; What You Need to Know*

E – **AMBA** - *Discounts Through Passport; So Many Ways to Save*

Buffet Lunch Provided on Tuesday, October 6, 2026

**Complete One Form per person - mail with check payable to:
GSRA, P.O. Box 6308, Elberton, GA 30635**

PLEASE SEE THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions? help@mygsra.com or 770/312-2799

For the Schedule of the Annual Meeting, please visit the website: www.mygsra.com