

ERS Board Meeting Summary

By Chuck Freedman

While the following information was emailed out and posted on social media, we wanted to provide a summary of the ERS April Board meeting. Based on the ERS' actuary and their formula for calculating COLA's, the Board approved a 0.25% COLA effective July 2024. Retirees receiving less than \$11,800 annually will receive a one-time payment equivalent to 4.75% of their pension. All other retirees will receive a flat amount of approximately \$560. The one-time payments will be issued at the end of June. For more detailed information, see the ERS announcement at <https://www.ers.ga.gov/post/colapost-retirement-benefit-adjustment-0>

Don't Forget to Vote

By Dan Coffee

Election Day is Tuesday, May 21st for the upcoming General Primary / Non-Partisan Election. Advanced (Absentee In-Person) voting began Monday, April 29th and ends Friday, May 17th. This election includes local positions, state and federal representatives, and party questions. A party preference must be declared. If a non-partisan ballot is requested, only the Judicial races will appear on the ballot.

The Georgia Secretary of State website contains a My Voter Portal (GA My Voter Page) to check your voter registration status, poll location, early voting locations in your county, registration information on file with the county office, and sample ballots specific for your voting precinct. Also, you can visit the My Voter Portal at Georgia Voter ID for information regarding acceptable forms of voter identification.

Stay informed about the issues and candidates' positions and please VOTE! For more information, visit the Georgia Secretary of State website at <https://sos.ga.gov>.





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2024 Annual Meeting Macon, Georgia October 7th & 8th “Teamwork Makes the Dream Work”

STEP #1: Make Hotel Reservations

By Allan Hill and Kip Mann

Join the team to reach our goal of financial security and healthy retirement for all state retirees by attending our annual meeting and demonstrating your support by your presence. To make your attendance as pleasant, comfortable and affordable as possible rates have been negotiated with hotels close to the Robert F. Hatcher, Sr. Conference Center.

The following hotels have provided a special rate for the conference:

- Holiday Inn Express-Macon West – 40 Rooms/night, King or Double Queen - \$114.00/Night*
- Comfort Inn & Suites Hotel – 40 Rooms/night, King or Double Queen - \$107.00/Night*
- LaQuinta Hotel – 30 Rooms/night, King or Double Queen - \$95.00/Night*

* Sales + hotel/motel tax extra

Only you can determine how many nights you wish to stay. If you live close enough to Macon, you may wish to commute and save the lodging expense or you may want to enjoy the sights Macon has to offer and stay as long as you wish. All the hotels have stated you can stay at the rates quoted days before and after the meeting takes place. Below is the contact information given for each hotel so that you can register. Please indicate you are a member of Georgia State Retirees Association to receive the special rate.

Hotel	Contact Information
Holiday Inn Express – Macon West	478-803-0033
Comfort Inn and Suites Hotel	www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/CG68K4 or call 478 621 7977
LaQuinta Hotel	478-788-6226

Reserve your room now. You will receive Step Two: Conference Registration soon!

We need all our team there! See you in Macon!



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From the Home Office

By Robert Riddle

Hello GSRA Members,

“Be grateful for what you have and stop complaining – it bores everybody else, does you no good, and doesn’t solve any problems.”–Zig Ziglar

Since the last ERSGA Board meeting, I have been thinking about the sentiment in this quote. Every month when my pension hits my bank account, I am grateful for the opportunity I had to work for the great state of Georgia and earn this pension. YES, we all sacrificed years of our lives and YES, we all made a lot less money than if we had taken the corporate employment route. By working hard, making Georgia a better place, and following the rules, we earned a monthly pension. It is a true blessing and I for one refuse to take it for granted!

Do we deserve COLAs similar to other state/teacher employee retirement systems, **YES!** I am grateful for each member of GSRA and the work you are doing to solve this problem. Incrementally, we are making progress. Chuck Freedman, Chuck Clay, Beverly Littlefield and many others worked tirelessly to get the ERS to repeal the age threshold for disabled retirees to receive cost of living benefit adjustments. Because of this work, the ERS Board approved changes to remove the age threshold. While COLAs of 0.25% kind of feels like a slap in the face, along with the one-time payment, it is better than nothing! GSRA was also instrumental in getting \$500 million appropriated by the legislature to bring our pension fund closer to being fully funded. We are hopeful, if funds are available, that we will get subsequent appropriations of \$500 million (at least 2) to bring the fund up to 80% funded.

It is not just me and the GSRA Board that needs to be advocating for us. We need more problem solvers and less complainers. What can you do? Take to social media and invite all current and retired state employees to join GSRA. To be heard, we need more members. There are over 100k current and retired members of ERS. Each one can be a part of solving this problem!

One final quote to end this month: **“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I’ll try again tomorrow.” –Mary Anne Radmacher**

GSRA is not giving up and we will try again and again until what is right prevails!

Local GSRA Chapter News

ABC Chapter

The ABC Chapter met on April 15, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. at the Covered Wagon with guest speaker Debbie Scarborough with AMBA. She gave a very insightful presentation about services available and a great discussion on long term care planning in retirement. Next meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. at the Covered Wagon in Douglas GA.



Figure 1: ABC Chapter members enjoyed lunch and a presentation by Debbie Scarborough with AMBA.

Augusta Chapter

The Augusta Chapter met on April 16, 2024, at the Richmond County Health Department in Augusta. Brandon Warrick, Community Program Coordinator, with the Suicide Prevention Coalition, gave an informative presentation regarding the Coalition's goals and community outreach program. He also cited some eye-opening statistics regarding our area's suicides. Our group decided we would ask Mr. Warrick to return later this year and conduct the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training offered by his organization.

The number attending our meeting increased from last month, and several suggestions were made to increase our numbers. One promising suggestion was to have a table at the local “You Decide” state insurance meeting that will be held later this year.

The next meeting will be held on May 21 at 1 pm at the Richmond County Health Department, 950 Laney Walker Blvd., Augusta. A film regarding suicide prevention is tentatively scheduled. We encourage all our local state retirees to join us for fellowship, refreshments, and hopefully useful information.



Figure 2: The Augusta Chapter brainstormed ideas on how to increase membership.

Southwest Chapter

The Southwest Georgia chapter met on April 17, 2024, at Albany State University’s West campus. Chapter President, Bob Pollock welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Dr. Charlie Rouse, “The Medicine Man,” discussed natural medicines and why he believes they are superior to prescription medicines.

President Pollock discussed the upcoming ERS Board meeting scheduled for April 18th. Several important issues are on the agenda including potential COLAs and a one-time payment. The board decisions will be shared as soon as they are available.



Figure 3: Southwest Chapter members enjoyed Dr. Charlie Rouse's presentation on natural medicines.

Our next chapter meeting is planned for July 17th.

Tri-County Chapter

The Tri-County Chapter held its second quarterly meeting of 2024 on April 29th at Doodlum's Barbecue & Fruit Stand in Woodbury with fifty-seven (57) in attendance. Special guests included State Representative Debbie Buckner, State Representative David Jenkins, Jim Potvin, Executive Director of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia, and Robert Riddle, GSRA State President.



Figure 4: Left to Right- Robert Riddle, Rep. Debbie Buckner, David Cawthon, ERS Executive Director, Jim Potvin, Rep. David Jenkins

Both Representative Buckner and Representative Jenkins serve on the House Retirement Committee and shared progress made this past legislative session to shore up the ERS fund. Jim Potvin shared that ongoing discussions with state leaders resulted in the \$500 Million infusion of funds this year as the first installment of \$1.5 Billion needed to get the system

back up to 80% funded. Mr. Potvin acknowledged the impact GSRA has had elevating the funding issue and helping to achieve the progress we have seen to date.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and fellowship.



Figure 5: Tri-County Chapter had a good turnout for the quarterly meeting.

The next chapter meeting is tentatively planned for Monday, August 26th back at Doodlum's Barbecue Restaurant in Woodbury.

Valdosta Chapter

The Valdosta Chapter had a great program on cyber security. The chapter enjoyed good conversations.



Figure 6: An interesting presentation on cyber security was enjoyed by the attendees.



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Welcome New Members!

Name	County	Name	County
Minnie Beard	Richmond	Larry Benton	Putnam
Teresa Crouch	Columbia	Rosalyn Dallas	Fulton
Libby Doran	Habersham	Mildred Granderson	Dekalb
Robert Gross	Floyd	Gwendolyn Jackson	Muscogee
Lisa Johnson	Lamar	Dorothy Johnson	Lamar
Dorothy Johnson	Bibb	Steve Kish	Cherokee
Carole Martinez	Cobb	Merica Morris	Monroe
Yumiko Nakazono	Fulton	Amelia Tanner	Johnson
Karen Thompson	Tattnall	Gayle Washington	Clayton
Mary Wells	Cherokee	Rosalyn Williams	Cobb
Mary Woodruff	Baldwin	Russell Zirkle	Lanier

Anthem



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*Fixed simple interest rate: 34.7% per year with a one-time fee of \$49.00. For example, a \$3,000.01 loan repaid in 26 installments over 26 months, the APR will be 35.95% and the approximate monthly payment will be \$170.00 (assuming a loan execution date of 06/01/2023). Other terms and conditions apply, and your loan may vary depending upon your loan execution date, actual payroll deduction schedule, etc. Must be employed for at least 1 year with the employer to be eligible to apply. Not all applicants will qualify for a loan. Loan is based on an agreement between the borrower and BMG Money, Inc. The Georgia State Retirees Association is not responsible for any financial aspects of LoansforRetirees.





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