



Newsletter

Vol. 19, Number 5

www.MyGSRA.com

May 2025

ERS COLA/Post-Retirement Benefit Adjustment

By Dan Coffee

During the Annual Board Meeting on April 17th, the Board of Trustees for the Employees' Retirement System granted 1.) a One-Time Payment to be made in June and 2.) a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) effective starting in July. Below are the details and eligibility requirements from the ERS website.

ERS One-Time Payment

A one-time payment equal to 4.5% of the annual ERS benefit in pay as of June 2025, to a maximum payment of about \$564.

If a survivor benefit is spread between multiple beneficiaries, each beneficiary will share proportionally in the one-time payment described above, so that the total one-time benefit payable on behalf of the deceased member does not exceed a payment of about \$560.

To be eligible for this one-time payment, the retiree or beneficiary must meet the following stipulations:

- Must receive a monthly benefit during June 2025 - this one-time payment will not be paid in a subsequent month.
- Must have a retirement effective date on or before June 1, 2024.
- Non-disability retirees' Normal Retirement Date must be on or before June 1, 2024.

Other conditions:

- Not available to GSEPS retirees with a membership date on or after July 1, 2009 (this group is specifically excluded by statute from receiving post retirement adjustment payments).
- No one-time payment will be made based on the receipt of a SGLI monthly annuity.

The exact amount of payment will be determined at the time of payment.

ERS Cola

A 0.50% monthly cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on benefits not in excess of the Social Security wage base, with the following stipulations:

- Must have a retirement effective date on or before July 1, 2024, for the July 2025 COLA, and
- Non-disability retirees' Normal Retirement Date must be on or before July 1, 2024, and

- Not available to GSEPS retirees with a membership date on or after July 1, 2009 (this group is specifically excluded by statute from receiving post-retirement adjustment payments).
- SGLI annuities are not eligible for COLAs.

The 0.50% increase as of July 1, 2025, will be reflected in the July monthly benefit payment payable at the end of July. This increase will be payable for life.

Together, We Will Continue the Fight

By Allan Hill

Last year, GSRA saw significant progress in our fight for a meaningful COLA; this year, we must stay together to continue that fight. Our Annual Meeting is one of the most effective ways to show our Legislators that we are determined to do just that.

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is working hard to assemble what we hope will be one of our best Annual Meetings. Reviewing last year's evaluations, we decided to allow more time for each workshop. This year, therefore, the workshops will be 75 minutes long, and each attendee will choose two workshops to attend. While the committee is still finalizing the agenda, we hope to offer workshops on wellness, brain health, legal/financial issues, and smartphone technology.

The GSRA Annual meeting will be held October 27-28, 2025 at the Robert F Hatcher Sr. Conference Center on the Middle Georgia State University in Macon.



Figure 1: Last year's GSRA attendees overwhelmingly approved of the Robert F Hatcher Sr. Conference Center in Macon.



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As we do every year, we'll have a general session featuring presentations by ERS and DCH/SHBP. We also hope to have a presentation on ERS funding and, if their schedules permit, appearances by gubernatorial candidates.

The Annual Meeting includes GSRA's Business Meeting, with the Legislative Update, Treasurer's Report, the President's State of the Association, and election of officers for 2026.

We'll also have fun! Our opening reception will once again feature the Mercer University Jazz Band, great food, and great camaraderie. The always highly anticipated door prizes will be the icing on the cake! Look for registration in June and make plans to attend.

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

Hotel	Negotiated Rates	Contact Information
Holiday Inn Express – Macon West	40 rooms/night, 20 King or 20 Double Queen - \$119.00 per night (taxes are extra)	Call the front desk at 478/803-0033 for reservations, and ask for the GSRA group rate*. *A word of caution – reaching the front desk at the Holiday Inn Express is a challenge. You may have to call several times before getting an answer. It's a very nice hotel, however, and worth the effort.
Comfort Inn and Suites Hotel	40 rooms/night, 20 King or 20 Double Queen - \$109.00 per night (taxes are extra)	For reservations, use the following link: https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/HD84T7 . The group's name is GSRA Conference Group, and the group # is HD84T7.
LaQuinta Hotel	40 rooms/night, 20 Kings or 20 Doubles - \$109.00 per night (taxes are extra)	For reservations, use the LaQuinta reservation site: www.wyndhamhotels.com , click on special rates, and use group code 1405. You can also call the hotel directly at 478-788-6226.

To get the group rate, reservations must be made for all three hotels by September 25, 2025.

There are also some hotels at the I-475/Zebulon Rd exit, about 7 miles north of the Hatcher Center, with very reasonable rates. They include a Comfort Suites, a Comfort Inn, and a Garner Hotel.



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Georgia Public Service Commission Elections Resuming – Voters Get to Choose for the First Time Since 2020!

By Beverly Littlefield

Often misunderstood and overlooked by voters, the Georgia Public Service Commission wields almost total power to regulate investor-owned utilities (gas, electricity, telecommunications) and provide utility infrastructure planning for the entire state.

Their decisions about utility rates and licenses directly affect how much you pay for your utility services. Rates for electric power have been of greatest interest recently and have been steadily climbing over the last several years. Georgia Power customers in particular have been hit with six rate increases in the last three years. Since 2020, the average Georgia Power household is paying about \$43 more per month for electricity, on average, due to PSC-approved rate hikes.

Even if you are not a direct Georgia Power customer, you most likely get your power indirectly from the Company as a result of corporate cooperation. Electric Membership Corporations, EMCs, purchase power at wholesale rates from Georgia Power which affects EMC customers' retail rates. So Georgia Power rate increases do affect EMC customers indirectly. Decisions by Georgia Power on grid investments for power transmission and distribution also can affect EMC customer directly. Unless you live in a part of North Georgia served by the Tennessee Valley Authority, or you're in "off the grid" entirely, this election should matter to you.

Also of critical importance for rural Georgians is the PSC's authority to regulate those telecommunications companies that also provide internet services. The Commission holds considerable authority to set rates and to decide where to expand telecom-based internet access through the administration of the Universal Access Fund. ([Internet Access in Georgia: Stats & Figures](#))

Why were these elections delayed?

In 2021 plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit challenged the at-large, statewide election process, maintaining that statewide voting dilutes the voting power of Black residents, and therefore violated the Voting Rights Act. In August 2022, a federal judge agreed and postponed the District 2 and 3 elections scheduled for that November. But in November 2023, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that ruling, allowing the election to proceed. Finally, last June (2024) the US Supreme Court declined to hear the case, ending the legal challenge and making the 11th Circuit's ruling the final word.

So, elections are back "on" in 2025 for Commissioners for District 2 (East and Southeast Georgia/Savannah, Augusta, Athens, East Atlanta suburbs) and District 3 (DeKalb, Clayton and Fulton counties). While candidates must reside in the districts they represent on the Commission, do *not pay attention to districts. These are statewide seats that all voters elect.* Also note that the candidates are running in *partisan* primaries, so you must select either a Republican or Democratic ballot to vote.



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Who's on the Ballot?

In District 2 (East and Southeast Georgia), Republican incumbent Tim Echols is facing a primary challenge from Lee Muns. In the Democratic primary, Alicia Johnson is running unopposed.

In District 3 (DeKalb, Clayton, and Fulton Counties), three* Democrats will face off in their primary: Keisha Sean Waites, Peter Hubbard, and Robert Jones.

*Daniel Blackman's name will appear on the Democratic Primary ballot, but at the time of the newsletter's publication, he had been disqualified from the race. In hearing a challenge to Blackman's candidacy, a judge found the candidate failed to provide adequate proof of residency in the District. The Secretary of State then moved to disqualify him. **At this point, any votes cast for Blackman will not be counted.**

What's the Election/Voting Schedule?

Early primary voting May 27th – June 13th

Primary election on June 17th

Run-off for District 3, if needed, on July 15th

General election on November 4th

Polling hours are Monday through Friday, from 7 AM to 7 PM.

Weekend voting will be available on Saturdays, May 31st and June 7th, from 9 AM to 6 PM, and Sundays, June 1st and June 8th, from 12 PM to 5 PM.

Note: Commissioners serve 6-year terms. The next election for the District 5 seat (Northwest-West Central Georgia) will be held in 2026. Elections for the remaining two seats will be held in 2028.

What You Can Do:

Absentee ballots for the election are already being issued. Any voter registered in Georgia can vote absentee by mail. You must request your absentee ballot no later than June 6 and return it to your county election office by 7 PM on June 17, 2025.

You can see your early voting locations and request an absentee ballot on the [Georgia Secretary of State's website](https://sos.ga.gov/).



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American Red Cross Seeking Volunteers

By Carrie Jones, Recruiter for the American Red Cross

My name is Carrie Jones and I am a recruiter for the American Red Cross volunteer program. I was hoping to get your assistance in spreading the word about some of the volunteer needs we have in **Screven County** and the surrounding areas. We are always seeking leaders in our communities to help us spread the word! We currently need volunteers for the following positions:

Disaster Action Team - While major hurricanes and wildfires receive the most news coverage, smaller disasters are just as devastating to the families affected. Most of the nearly 65,000 emergencies that the Red Cross responds to each year are smaller disasters, such as home fires. As a [Disaster Action Team](#) volunteer, you can help comfort and support people in your community by meeting their immediate needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, or supplies and connecting them to long-term recovery services. We provide all the training you need.

Duty Officer / Dispatcher - Acts as the dispatcher for our Disaster Action Team responses.

Recovery Care Responder - Provide follow-up and Recovery Planning Services, including referrals, for individuals and households following regional events, primarily home fires.

Sheltering Service Associate - Support day-to-day activities within a shelter, which may include working in reception, registration, feeding, dormitories, information or other areas.

Disaster Assessment - Organize and provide logistical support for disaster assessment workshops and trainings. Collects and analyzes data on high-risk disaster areas.

Become a Red Cross Volunteer Today!

Every day, the Red Cross sees the heartbreak of people coping with more intense storms, heavier rainfall, higher temperatures, stronger hurricanes, and more devastating wildfires. As more people rely on the Red Cross for help, the need for compassionate volunteers has never been greater. Help comfort and support people who are forced from their homes due to fires, storms, and other emergencies, so they don't have to face tough times alone.

Email or call the Red Cross to apply, GARecruit@redcross.org or 404-575-3749.

Discover the Role That's Right for You!

[How To Volunteer | American Red Cross](#)

Member Spotlight: Robert Goss

By Marlene Autry



Robert Goss grew up and went to school in LaFayette, Georgia. After high school, he attended Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, where he graduated in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in justice studies. He began his career with the State of Georgia at the Department of Corrections (GDC) in 1996, working at Hays State Prison as a correctional officer. After a couple of years in that role, he became a prison counselor. In 2000, he transferred to GDC's Probation Division as a Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit probation officer. After years of supervising all types of felony probationers, Robert was promoted to Probation Officer III in 2009, supervising other probation officers in LaFayette and later in Dalton. In 2013, he accepted a promotion to Chief Probation Officer in the Middle Judicial Circuit and moved to Swainsboro, GA, with his wife, Mary Jane. Also, this same year, Robert earned a master's degree in public administration from Columbus State University.

In 2015, Robert's job was absorbed into the State's newest agency, the Department of Community Supervision, which combined all of Georgia's adult probation and parole officers into one unit as Community Supervision Officers. Soon after, Robert was promoted to Coordinating Chief Community Supervision Officer for the Middle Judicial Circuit. In 2019, Robert and his wife were ready to move closer to home, so Robert transferred to the Rome Judicial Circuit, where he served as Coordinating Chief CSO until he retired from DCS in late 2023. Robert and his wife, Mary Jane, live in a cabin on Lookout Mountain with their pets. They attend New Salem Methodist Church and enjoy visits from their family.

Robert is excited to serve as president of the Coosa Chapter of GSRA and hopes to help the chapter grow and prosper.

From the Banks of the Chattahoochee River

By Judy Bryson

Hello GSRA Members:

We are thrilled to reflect on the success of the recent Membership Recruitment and Retention Roundtable Event, a significant gathering aimed at enhancing the GSRA membership experience. This event brought together passionate participants to share ideas, strategize, and explore innovative approaches to attract and retain members.

The success of this event would not have been possible without the diligent efforts of the AMBA Team Members: Lexie Mowery, Chris Gluck, Eric Cannon, and Cristen Cochran. Their meticulous planning and facilitation ensured the event ran seamlessly. We also express our deep gratitude to Bo Carr for his outstanding leadership at AMBA in sponsoring this event for GSRA.

Throughout the event, participants engaged in meaningful discussions, sharing their experiences, ideas, and challenges. The collective goal was to develop actionable plans to attract new members and retain existing ones. A notable segment highlighted the impressive work undertaken by GSRA's Savannah/Coastal Local Chapter over the past year. Their efforts provided an inspiring model for other local chapters.



Figure 2: The Recruitment and Retention Roundtable, sponsored by AMBA, included participants from across the state.

Beverly Littlefield, Past President, lead off with a presentation detailing current membership statistics. Her insights helped focus attention on areas needing strategic effort. This foundational data set the stage for the discussions that followed.



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Lorr Elias, representing the Savannah/Coastal Local Chapter and GSRA Board Member at Large, introduced the workgroup and provided information on developing outreach strategies for recruitment, retention, and membership engagement. GSRA members Diane Fitch, Laura Ryan, and Patricia Merritt shared practical tools and techniques and the challenges they faced during their endeavors. Their stories served as valuable learning experiences for all participants.

Looking forward, GSRA has established a Task Force dedicated to strengthening membership and enhancing engagement. We are delighted that Lorr Elias has graciously stepped into the role of Chair for this Task Force. With her leadership, the group will delve deeper into proactive strategies and initiatives to solidify GSRA's membership base.

The Membership Recruitment and Retention Roundtable Event was a remarkable success, leaving us inspired and equipped with actionable ideas for the future. As we refine and implement these strategies, we remain committed to fostering a thriving GSRA community through collaboration, innovation, and sincere dedication.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this event. Together, we are building a stronger and more connected GSRA membership experience.

Judy



Local GSRA Chapter News

Southwest Chapter

The GSRA Southwest Georgia chapter met on April 23rd at Albany State University's West campus. With 16 members present, chapter president Bob Pollock welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda.



Figure 3: The Southwest GSRA Chapter had an informative quarterly meeting with 16 members present.

Ms. Reveen Stewart, Community Outreach Specialist for Southwest Georgia, presented a program on Medicare fraud and how we can prevent, detect, and report it.

President Pollock discussed highlights from the 2025 Legislative Session and reminded members that the GSRA Annual meeting will be in Macon again on October 27th and 28th.

Our next chapter meeting is planned for July 24, 2025.

Tri-County Chapter

The Tri-County Chapter held its second quarterly meeting of 2025 on April 28th at Doodlum's Barbecue & Fruit Stand in Woodbury with 28 members in attendance.



Figure 4: Tri-County members enjoyed a delicious lunch at its recent chapter meeting.

David Cawthon, Chapter President, welcomed Judy Bryson, GSRA State President. Judy provided a recap of the legislative session and GSRA's advocacy efforts. Judy also shared membership recruitment efforts and promoted the upcoming Membership Roundtable Event on May 15th in Macon.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and fellowship. The next chapter meeting is planned for Monday, July 28th, at 11:30 AM at Doodlum's Barbecue Restaurant in Woodbury.

East Metro Chapter

The East Metro Chapter held its quarterly meeting on April 28th at the First Baptist Church Annex in Covington with 33 members and one guest present. Two were first-time attendees, and two renewed their memberships. President David Taylor welcomed attendees and invited everyone to lunch. After lunch and lots of conversation catching up on news,



Figure 5: East Metro had 33 members and one guest attending the April 28th meeting.

President Taylor gave opening remarks and introduced our guest, Ben Hendricks, a retired Covington attorney with over 40 years of experience in various areas of the legal profession.

Mr. Hendricks' presentation included legal topics of interest to all, including estate planning, wills, codicils, probate, advance directives, powers of attorney, and other relevant areas, including what is needed for each to be effective and legal. He also provided information on accessing the current official Georgia advanced directive document. Mr. Hendricks infused humor into his discussion with stories from many years of experience.



Figure 6: Guest speaker attorney Ben Hendricks provided information relevant to chapter members.

Members showed interest by engaging in a question-and-answer session and sharing personal experiences.

After Mr. Hendricks' presentation, the door prize drawing was held. Several nice prizes were given away, including two hand-carved wooden containers made by a member.

The meeting was then adjourned with the next meeting to be held near the end of July.

Columbus Chapter

The Columbus chapter held its quarterly membership meeting on May 20, 2025. There were 28 members in attendance.



Figure 7: The Columbus Chapter had a productive meeting on May 20th.

Kia Barrow from the River Valley Area Agency on Aging spoke with us about numerous services and programs available through their agency. It was a very interactive meeting, and members enjoyed the information they received.



Figure 8: Kia Barrow with the River Valley Area Agency on Aging provided an informative program.

Our next chapter meeting will be our Legislative Reception scheduled for Tuesday, August 19, 2025.

CSRA-GSRA Chapter

The CSRA-GSRA monthly meeting was held at Miyako/Rocking Crab Restaurant in Grovetown on May 20. There was much discussion regarding the pending cost-of-living increase and the one-time bonus. We all enjoyed an excellent lunch and conversation with our fellow retirees. The next meeting will be held on June 17th at 12:30 pm at the Chop House Restaurant, 3450 Wrightsboro Road, Augusta. All are invited to join our group for a meal and fellowship. Please follow us on Facebook at CSRA-GSRA.



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April 2025 New GSRA Members, Welcome!

Name	County	Name	County
Phyllis Allen-McField	Dekalb	Jeffrey Brewer	Emanuel
Elizabeth Cheney	Floyd	Carlotta Ficklin	Richmond
Linda Hawkins	Gordon	Alzada Holmes	Richmond
Donald Kent	Dekalb	Alton Mobley	Toombs
Vanessa Taylor	Dekalb	Eloise Walker	Fulton
Herman Willis	Tift		



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