



Newsletter

Vol. 19, Number 7

www.MyGSRA.com

July 2025

Growing Stronger by Raising Awareness

By Allan Hill

Michael Thurmond To Be Keynote Speaker at Annual Meeting

Michael L. Thurmond has worn many hats in his illustrious career as a historian, DeKalb County Chief Executive, superintendent of DeKalb schools, professor, State representative, and, to many of us, boss. He has made a lasting impact as Commissioner of Labor and as leader of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, touching countless lives and championing progress across the state. His legacy is one defined by service, leadership, and a steadfast commitment to creating opportunities for others. GSRA is honored to announce that Mr. Thurmond will be the keynote speaker at our Annual Meeting. He will speak on Monday, October 27th, during the Opening Session at 12:15. His extensive experience in Georgia State government will resonate with all of us who have served with pride as State employees.

According to the GSRA By-laws, the purpose of the Annual Meeting is the election of officers to the Board of Directors, the presentation of the Treasurer's report, the Legislative report, and the State of the Association by the President. But just as important, the Annual Meeting is an opportunity for members from all over the state and beyond to come together in fellowship to strengthen the bonds and goals of our Association, to attend workshops on critical topics that affect all of us as retirees and seniors, and to spread the message of GSRA to those retirees (and active employees) who are our future members. An important mission of the Annual Meeting is to raise awareness of who we are, what we do, and what our futures should be, and in doing so, make GSRA even stronger.

Last year, GSRA saw 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 we can show our Legislators that we are determined to do just that.

This year, 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, caregiving, legal/financial issues, and smartphone technology.

As we do every year, we'll have a general session featuring presentations by the Employees Retirement System (ERS) and the Department of Community Health's State Health Benefit Program (DCH/SHBP). We plan to have a presentation on ERS funding.

We'll also have fun! Our opening reception will once again feature the Mercer University Jazz Band, great food, and great camaraderie. And the always highly anticipated door prizes will be the icing on the cake! Registration is now available on our website. Please 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 hotels located at the I-475/Zebulon Rd exit, approximately 7 miles north of the Hatcher Center, offering very reasonable rates. They include a Comfort Suites, a Comfort Inn, and a Garner Hotel.



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



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Power in Unity: More Members, More Say at the Capitol

By Lorr Elias, GSRA Southeast Membership Team

The Southeast (SE) Georgia Membership team is seeking individuals who are passionate about GSRA, its mission, and the impact it can have on our community. We need your help in increasing membership through innovative ideas and a willingness to take on some tasks that will help us accomplish this goal. While we are focused on the southeastern part of the state, all GSRA members' input is welcome.

We would like to schedule a meeting to discuss additional ways to increase membership. Ultimately, we would like to establish a membership model that can be replicated across the state.

Do you know of a suitable location where we could gather to have these discussions? Is there a particular day of the week you think would be best? What else should the SE Georgia Membership team consider?

We have developed GSRA flyers that need to be posted around town, and would like to get your ideas and help on where they should be posted.

The Savannah Chapter members discussed events that members could participate in as a group, such as the Walk to End Alzheimer's on October 25th. Other ideas include setting up a membership table in locations where we could talk with potential members.

As soon as we get your feedback, we will send out information about where we will meet and the date/time. Please send your ideas, thoughts, and feedback to seгамembership@mygsra.com. Thank you to everyone who makes GSRA a vital part of our retirement.



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In Case You Missed It...Your Passport to Savings

By Beverly Littlefield

If you weren't able to join us on July 16th, you missed the first in a series of informative webinars hosted by our long-time partner, AMBA, the American Member Benefits Association. President Judy Bryson opened the event, welcoming forty-three GSRA members and prospective members who had signed up to learn about Passport Benefits. Available to all *paid* members of GSRA, Passport offers significant savings on a wide range of products, including restaurant dining, travel, and recreation, as well as name-brand clothing, technology products, and home appliances, among others.

As a valued member, you have access to the **myAMBA Discounts Program**, an exclusive discount platform offering savings at thousands of local and national merchants.

Here's how to get started:

1. Visit the program website: <https://passportcorporate.com/join/?pk=5oRHZISnp8s=&prc=SAVERS>
2. Enter your preferred email address to register.
3. Complete your profile details on the next page.
4. Once registered, you'll receive your unique membership number to begin accessing discounts right away.

Access on the go:

Download the **Passport Mobile** app from your app store and log in with your email and membership number. You'll have instant access to savings anytime, anywhere.

A full recording of the webinar will be available from the GSRA website soon. Meanwhile, please plan to join us for the next webinar, scheduled for Wednesday, August 20th, at 10:00 A.M. The topic will be "Protecting Your Nest Egg," and more information, including registration details, will be shared via email soon.



Newsletter

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From the Banks of the Chattahoochee River

By Judy Bryson

Hello GSRA Members,

As we gear up for our annual conference, I want to share a bit about this year's theme: "Growing Stronger by Raising Awareness." In today's fast-changing world, our ability to stay informed and stand together has never been more important. This theme is a reminder that by shining a light on the issues that matter—like protecting retiree benefits and building a supportive community—we become stronger as an association.

Raising awareness isn't just about understanding challenges; it's about turning that understanding into real action. Whether we're talking about pensions, healthcare, or the value of public service, our collective voice can make a difference. This conference is all about learning new ways to support one another and make sure our retirees' needs remain front and center.

I'm excited for you to join us as we share stories, build connections, and discover practical ways to advocate for our members. Together, we can keep growing stronger and make a real impact!

Judy



Local GSRA Chapter News

GSRA-CSRA Chapter

The CSRA-GSRA chapter met on July 15, 2025, at the Cracker Barrel Restaurant in Grovetown. President Barbara Larisecy gave a recap of the July GSRA Board Meeting, and there was much discussion regarding COLAs for the future. The annual meeting in Macon in October was also discussed, and several members expressed an interest in attending.



Figure 2: GSRA-CSRA enjoyed a delicious meal and great fellowship at the July meeting.

The next meeting will be held on August 19 at 12:30 pm at PF Chang's Restaurant near the Augusta Mall. All are invited to attend and learn how GSRA is attempting to better your future. Please follow us on Facebook at CSRA-GSRA.

East Metro Chapter

The East Metro GSRA Chapter met on July 21 at its regular location in Covington, with 28 members present, plus our special guest and speaker, GSRA President Judy Bryson.



Figure 3: East Metro GSRA Chapter had 28 members attending the July Chapter meeting in Covington.

She indicated that GSRA actions and strategies to increase membership are a big focus, as a larger membership base is needed to be more effective. A recent Membership Roundtable sponsored by AMBA resulted in the sharing of recruitment ideas among chapters. Ongoing Roundtable webinars are scheduled for the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 10:00 A.M., and members will be sent notices.

She also discussed the most recent legislative sessions and ongoing GSRA advocacy. An Action Alert was recently sent to all members, asking everyone to contact key leadership as indicated in the Alert regarding the need for meaningful COLAs. Several members said they did not receive the Alert. A follow-up will likely be issued, and members were encouraged to respond accordingly.

President Bryson advised that GSRA leadership members have had numerous meetings with key legislators, the OPB Director, the ERS President, and Board members, as well as the Governor's office and others, and these meetings will continue. In addition to these contacts, it is vital that legislators also hear from their constituents.

President Bryson reminded members of the upcoming October Annual Meeting and encouraged attendance. Registration is now online with the early registration fee of \$35. Late registration is \$45.

Questions were entertained, and President Taylor then held the door prize drawing, with several prizes being awarded. Presidents Bryson and Taylor presented a \$100 bill to the winner of the recruitment contest, Tanya Astin.



Figure 4: Presidents Bryson and Taylor presented the door prize to Tanya Austin.

The meeting was adjourned with another meeting planned in the next quarter.

ABC of Douglas Chapter

ABC of Douglas held its chapter meeting on July 21, 2025, at the Covered Wagon in Douglas, Georgia. Eleven members were in attendance, and two guest speakers were from the Coffee County DFCS office. Jeannie Whipple from the Office of Family Independence spoke on TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid. Devin Durham from Social Services spoke on Family Preservation Services and case management. They answered questions after their presentation.



Figure 5: Eleven members enjoyed lunch and an informative presentation.

Upcoming information concerning the fall conference was also discussed.

Coosa Valley Chapter

The Coosa Valley Chapter met on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at the Floyd County DFCS Office. Rob Gross, our new Chapter President, led the meeting. Earlier this year, Rob volunteered to serve as President, replacing Dinah Brock, who had been President since the Chapter was started in June 2019. Dinah did an excellent job, but is deserving of a much-needed break from this role. Special thanks to Rob for taking on this position.



Figure 6: Rob Gross, Chapter President, and Jordan Clayton, Guest Speaker.

The guest speaker was Jordan Clayton of the Floyd County Police Department. He discussed internet and phone scams especially those involving email messages or Facebook posts. He discussed “red flags” of possible scams that people should watch for and made suggestions on how to avoid being a victim. There was a productive discussion with attendees sharing stories about their own experiences. Everyone left the meeting more knowledgeable and less likely to be conned in the future.

Jan Hardeman, our Outreach Director, has sent out 27 postcards this calendar year to recruit new members in the Chapter’s area. At each meeting, there is usually at least one new retiree who received one of these postcards.

Other agenda items included an update from Board Member Marlene Autry on GSRA activities, information on ordering GSRA t-shirts, and the Annual Meeting, including possible Chapter door prizes.

Coosa Valley Chapter members Steve Moore (Treasurer) and Cherlyn Jordan married on July 27th! Let’s all congratulate this sweet couple.



Figure 7: GSRA members Steve Moore and Cherlyn Jordan had a beautiful wedding on July 27th.

Rob challenged everyone to recruit two new people to attend our next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, October 22, at 10:00 AM, at the Floyd County DFCS Office.

Central Metro Atlanta (Fulton/Dekalb) Chapter

The Central Metro Atlanta Chapter convened its latest meeting at the Avis G. Williams branch of the DeKalb Library System on July 21st, welcoming over 20 members. Chuck Freeman, GSRA Legislative Chair, opened with a comprehensive legislative update, followed by President Judy Bryson, who shared news on recent GSRA-sponsored initiatives.

Beverly Littlefield, GSRA Past President, then expressed hope that, as one of the first chapters organized as GSRA began its statewide growth, Central Metro would continue to convene and serve as a connection for the many current and future

members in the area. Long-time Chapter President, Sam Shepherd, has stepped away after providing many years of leadership to the chapter and service on the GSRA Board. He richly deserves his “second retirement,” and we look forward to Sam’s continuing participation in GSRA.

Currently, the chapter needs at least one person who is willing to serve as the point of contact for communications with the GSRA Board. Ideally, other members will also step forward to form a full slate of officers, enabling the chapter to continue serving as a focal point for the area, keeping everyone in touch, informed, and engaged.

Several members expressed an interest in holding another meeting this fall. GSRA Board Leadership is committed to assisting with that effort. Meanwhile, chapter members willing to serve in any capacity in chapter leadership may contact Judy Bryson, GSRA President, to discuss next steps.

Valdosta Chapter

The Valdosta GSRA Chapter met on July 22, 2025. The program was on Medicare Fraud provided by Reveen Stewart, who represented the Senior Medicare Patrol. She also talked about other scams being directed toward senior citizens.



Figure 8: Reveen Stewart, with the Senior Medicare Patrol, provided an informative program on Medicare Fraud.

We also talked about the Annual GSRA Conference scheduled for October 27-28, 2025, and provided an update of recent legislative action that impacts GSRA.

Southwest Georgia Chapter

Judy Bryson, GSRA President, met with the SW Georgia chapter on July 24th in Albany at Albany State University West campus. Judy discussed current GSRA issues and her plans for growing the association. She closed by asking for improvement suggestions and encouraging members to attend the Annual meeting in Macon on October 27th & 28th.



Figure 9: The SW Georgia chapter had 22 members at the July meeting.

Our next chapter meeting is scheduled for November 12th in Albany.

Tri-County Chapter

The Tri-County Chapter held its third quarterly meeting of 2025 on July 28th at Doodlum's Barbecue & Fruit Stand in Woodbury with thirty-five (35) members in attendance.



Figure 10: Tri-County had 35 members attend the July meeting.

David Cawthon, Chapter President, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation. Updates were provided on GSRA activities, including the upcoming Annual Meeting to be held in Macon. Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and social time together. The next chapter meeting is planned for Monday, November 3rd at 11:30 AM back at Doodlum's Barbecue Restaurant in Woodbury.



Newsletter

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July 2025

June 2025 New GSRA Members, Welcome!

| Name | County | Name | County |
|------------------|---------|--------------------|-----------|
| Adriane Davis | Chatham | Mollie Fleeman | Bibb |
| Ben Hall | Chatham | David Hermanowski | Lowndes |
| Tammy Huggins | Baldwin | Thomas McCoy | Habersham |
| Alonzo Patterson | Houston | Marti Robles | Floyd |
| Grady Sanford | Gilmer | Debbie Scarborough | Tift |
| John Waldrop | Monroe | William Worsham | Baldwin |
| Lesley Worsham | Baldwin | | |

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