



Newsletter

Vol. 20, Number 1

www.MyGSRA.com

January 2026

COLA ANTICIPATED FOR FY 2027

By Chuck Freedman

On January 21st, the Employees Retirement System's (ERS) Director, Jim Potvin, addressed the joint Appropriations Committee. During his presentation, he said he anticipates that ERS COLAs starting in July will be "something close to 2%." Three reasons for this, among several, Mr. Potvin mentioned, are

- Strong investment returns over the last seven-plus years.
- Two appropriations of \$500 million for our Pension Fund.
- Four years of annual amounts of \$150 million to raise the funded ratio above 80% and fund COLAs averaging a little over 1%.

He also cited the importance of ERS's "variable funding formula" for protecting the system and enabling it to respond to events. If funding goes up or investments are strong, ERS can be more generous. If funding declines or investments are weak, "Tap the brakes" to allow the system to recover. He also said increasing the funding ratio "... hopefully will lead to a sustained level of higher and higher COLA payments."

Mr. Potvin did not project a timeframe for the COLA increases nor indicate how much they might be. He also did not provide details on which conditions, other than higher-than-assumed investment returns, would support higher COLAs beyond the projected 1%+ funded by the annual \$150 million. Other highlights of his presentation include:

- For the governor's amended FY '26 recommendation, there are no changes.
- For the governor's general FY '27 recommendation:
 - \$26.75 million for a one-time adjustment for ERS members. This represents a \$10 million cut to the FY '26 budget.
 - \$5.2 million to increase the GSEPS 401(k) match for state law enforcement officers from a maximum of 9% to one of 15%.
 - No anticipated third \$500 million infusion into the pension fund or for any other purpose.
- The funded ratio of the Pension Fund has increased in recent years and will continue to do so in the future. Current projections are the strongest he has seen since joining ERS. The funded ratio will increase next year from 76% to about 82%, one year ahead of prior predictions. The reasons for this include:
 - Decreased assumed rate of return on investments from 7.3% to 7.0%
 - Reduced Amortization period (the time to pay for COLAs and other liabilities) from 25 to 20 years.



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- Two “extraordinary” \$500 million contributions. “The two \$500 million infusions to increase the funding ratio ... hopefully will lead to a sustained level of higher and higher COLA payments.”
- The four years of one-time adjustments have totaled \$117 million
- ERS’s recent experience study indicates that we can expect average COLAs from the annual \$150 million prefunding to be 1.15%, up from 1.05%. Mr. Potvin expects COLA amounts to improve over time.
- The high average rate of return over the last seven (7) years is anticipated for next year.
- For GSEPS employees, “enhancing” the employer match has boosted participation and contribution levels.

Mr. Potvin’s message was encouraging for the short term, but it also underscored how much work remains to secure reliable, meaningful COLAs for the future.



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Georgia State Law Enforcement Retirees

By Keith Golden, Retired GBI

On December 3, 2025, an unorganized group of 35 State law enforcement retirees, mostly from the Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, met with key members of the General Assembly, including the Chairman of the House Appropriation Committee and the Senate President. The Retirees asked the legislators to restore the promised COLAs for ERS retirees.

The legislators were told details of injurious assaults and acts of heroism by the very retirees sitting before them. The legislators were reminded that these ERS retirees were the arms and legs of State law and State policy for decades and should be remembered now as Georgia reaps the policy benefits of extraordinary financial success and billions in surplus revenue. The group was invited to the Capitol to tell their remarkable stories of devotion, courage, and sacrifice.

Following this meeting, the group partnered with GSRA and met with Rep. Lehman Franklin, the vice chair of the House retirement committee, and Rep. Bill Hitchens, retired Commissioner of Public Safety. The retired law enforcement group, now known as Georgia State Law Enforcement Retirees (GSLR), has grown to over 640 retirees. We look forward to continuing our COLA restoration efforts with GSRA, an excellent partner and guide. We will soon meet GSRA at the Capitol to jointly seek our overdue retirement benefits.

GSRA Plans Rally Day at the Capitol

By Chuck Freeman

GSRA is delighted to welcome our new partners, GSLR. As described above, GSLR invited GSRA to join them in Atlanta to testify on SB 339 (which, in part, mandates annual 3% COLAs except in dire state revenue circumstances) and to communicate our needs to as many legislators as possible.

As of Tuesday, January 27, the Senate Retirement Committee had not yet set a date to meet and consider SB 339. The meeting will likely be on either Feb 3 or Feb 10, so please plan to attend and support your fellow retirees. We will inform you as soon as we are notified of the date. We look forward to collaborating with GSLR as long as both organizations exist.



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Thoughts on the Annual Meeting – We Need Yours

By Allan Hill

An article in last month's newsletter entitled "Thoughts on the Annual Meeting" presented a synopsis of the evolution of the Annual Meeting, from the first one at Clayton State College to the two most recent ones at the Hatcher Center in Macon. It also detailed the considerations the Committee must take into account for future meetings, including the location and type of facility. Since 2026 is a gubernatorial election year, it should be held at a central location to invite candidates and increase the likelihood they will attend. That means probably Macon or somewhere in the Atlanta area. It also means deciding whether to seek a facility similar to the Hatcher Center, where members would stay at nearby hotels, or a conference center where we could all stay in the same hotel as the meeting.

To help us decide how to proceed, not just for this year but also for future meetings, we would like your input. For those who receive the newsletter via email, you can click [HERE](#) to view and submit responses **online** to the short survey illustrated below so we can get your thoughts. If you get your newsletter through the US Postal Service, you will not get the online survey, but you can still respond by emailing your answers to allandhill1@gmail.com.

We want the Annual Meeting to be an event that everyone can attend and enjoy. With your help, we can make that happen!

The survey is as follows:

Please choose one:

Would you like to go back to the Hatcher Center in Macon in 2026?

Would you like to meet somewhere else in Macon in 2026?

Would you prefer to hold the meeting elsewhere in the state in 2026?

Please answer yes or no:

Would you be willing to pay a higher registration fee to meet at a conference center where we could all stay in the same hotel and hold all events on-site?

How many Annual Meetings have you attended over the past five years?

0

1

2-3

4-5



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Membership Strategies

By Lorr Elias

The Southeast Georgia Membership Team of the Savannah Coastal Chapter had a predominant role in January's Chapter meeting. We were allowed an entire hour at the beginning of the meeting, during which we could share our 2026 membership strategies and receive personal feedback and involvement on them. Again, we made sure attendees understood the importance of receiving COLAs rather than bonuses. We also emphasized that annual memberships frequently lapse and that Pension Deduction is the best choice. We proposed a drawing for lapsed members who agree to convert to Pension Deduction, with a \$50 gift card every six months. We also reviewed procedures related to the ERS system. We continue to identify organizations or events focused on retirees where we can participate.

Some unique ideas came up at the meeting to engage retirees who could not attend in person. A quick way to increase membership is to have members refer one or two relatives to join. Immediately, people said they would sign up their husband, grown child, or another relative. As simple as that sounds, it will increase membership!!!! We have also learned how important it is for people to know that we are volunteers and GSRA has only two (2) part-time paid positions. Finally, the media is critical, and thanks to Patricia Merritt on our team, she continues to enhance and expand our media connections.

GSRA MERCHANDISE (NOW ON SALE)

The GSRA Merchandise is now available for purchase. We have several items for you to choose from, including our latest T-shirt designs as shown below.

To view all available merchandise and place an order, please visit our website at www.mygsra.com and follow the links for GSRA Merchandise. You can also email or mail an order and mail us a check.

Thank you.





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From the Banks of the Chattahoochee River

By Judy Bryson

Hello GSRA Members,

Happy New Year! Now that winter's here and we're all staying cozy inside, I wanted to take a minute to look back on what we've done and let you know how thankful I am for your support. Each January is an opportunity for renewal, the setting of new goals, and a revitalized focus, as we collectively prepare for the challenges of the legislative session. I'm proud to be your president and to see the dedication, teamwork, and spirit that make GSRA so special.

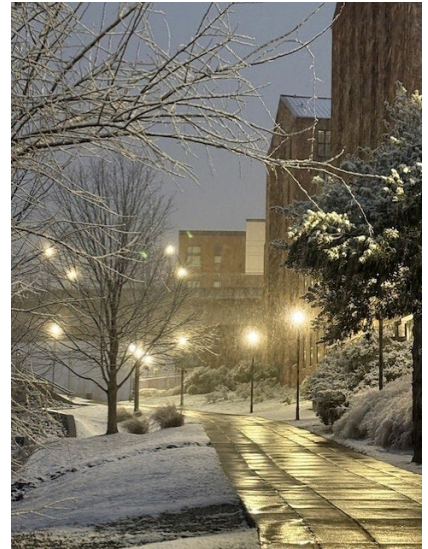
Last year, we increased our membership, welcomed a new chapter, and made our organization even stronger. Even when things got tough, we worked together to protect retiree benefits, start new projects, and keep our connections strong across Georgia. Thanks for always backing up our officers, board, and chapter leaders. We couldn't do it without you.

As we kick off this new year, I hope you'll jump in and get involved with GSRA's advocacy, outreach, and local chapter events. Your voice really matters, and together, we can keep making progress. Whether you come with us to the Capitol, join a task force, attend a local chapter meeting, or just catch up with other members over coffee, being part of things makes all the difference.

Let's make the most of everything 2026 brings our way. I know that if we work together and stay determined, we'll do even more great things for state retirees. Thanks again for your trust, passion, and commitment to GSRA. Here's to an awesome year ahead!

Take Care,

Judy



Local GSRA Chapter News

Southwest Georgia Chapter

Association Members Benefits Advisors (AMBA) sponsored a lunch and learn for the GSRA Southwest Georgia chapter on January 14th at Albany State University's West campus in Albany, Georgia.

Debbie Scarborough, AMBA Benefits Representative, presented an informative presentation on "Protecting Your Nest Egg". She also discussed other benefits available to AMBA members.

Chapter members were reminded that Georgia's 2026 Legislative Session began on Monday, January 12th. Attendees were asked to be on the lookout for action alerts from GSRA and to follow up with their local legislators.



Figure 1: The SW GA chapter members enjoyed lunch provided by AMBA.

SW GA's next chapter meeting is planned for April 15, 2026.

Savannah Coastal Chapter

On January 15, an enthusiastic but smaller than hoped-for crowd gathered at the SW Chatham Library for the first Savannah Coastal chapter meeting of the year. The theme for the meeting was Engagement, Strategies, and Goals for the 2026 Legislative Session. We had a very lively discussion led by the members of the Southeast Georgia Membership Team – Lorr Elias, Patricia Merritt, Pat Brisbon, Laura Ryan, Jeanette Bacon, and Melba Screven – about engagement and recruitment. They discussed outreach to non-members, connecting with retirees, civic and social media engagement, and spreading our message about the need for a meaningful COLA. President Allan Hill outlined GSRA's legislative goals for the 2026 legislative session and how members can help achieve those goals. Despite challenges, our chapter remains optimistic and determined.

For information about the Southeast Georgia Membership Team, contact them at segamembership@mygsra.com. They have been developing strategies and initiatives to increase membership, which they hope can be replicated throughout the State. They are anxious to work with other chapters to grow GSRA.

CSRA-GSRA Chapter

The CSRA-GSRA chapter met on January 20, 2026, at the Columbia County Health Department in Grovetown, GA. President Barbara Lariscy shared the latest news on Governor Kemp's budget proposal and its impact on retirees. She stated that our lobbyists are gearing up for the various committee meetings to advance retirees' interests. She also informed the group of the latest activities of the GSRA Board. President Lariscy asked for recommendations for speakers for our local chapter, and we will gladly accept any suggestions of interest from our local members.



Figure 2: The CSRA-GSRA chapter held their meeting on January 20th.

The next meeting will be held at the Columbia County Health Department, 1930 William Few Parkway, Grovetown. The speaker will be an expert in cyber security. We welcome all to attend, especially during this legislative session, in order to learn the latest news affecting your retirement.

Tri-County Chapter

The Tri-County Chapter held its first quarterly meeting of 2026 on January 26th at Doodlum's Barbecue & Fruit Stand in Woodbury. Thirty-six (36) members braved the cold weather to attend. Joy Evans, Chapter President, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation.



Figure 3: The Tri-County Chapter had a good turnout for the first meeting of 2026.

Nathan Coflin of the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) shared how SMP empowers and assists Medicare beneficiaries to prevent health care fraud, errors, and abuse. Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and social time together. The next chapter meeting is planned for Monday, April 27th, at 11:30 AM back at Doodlum's Barbecue Restaurant in Woodbury.



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December 2025 New GSRA Members, Welcome!

Name	County	Name	County
Diana Aspinwall	Gwinnett	Michelle Barclay	Fulton
Kenneth DeLoach	Laurens	Maryann Dillard	Gwinnett
Vicky Frazer	Jackson	Sonja Gay	Laurens
Thomas Hodges	Fulton	Nam Lee	Bibb
Sandra Ligneel	Chatham	Andre Marria	Thomas
Walter Marria, Jr	Thomas	Tyrone McMillar	Bibb
Charlene Morris	Gwinnett	Karen Oaks	Cobb
James Sanders, Jr	Worth	Diane Shelton	Gwinnett
Fred Todd	McIntosh		

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GEORGIA STATE RETIREES ASSOCIATION