

OPEN LETTER FROM GSRA PRESIDENT CLAUDE VICKERS TO THE
MEMBERSHIP OF GSRA

April 15, 2008

To all GSRA Members:

GSRA membership has grown at an amazing rate this past year, with an increase of over two thousand members! And it is precisely because of our growing numbers --- and your willingness to speak out --- that GSRA was so successful during the 2008 session of the Georgia Legislature.

As you know, Senate Bill 80, which would have allowed ERS funds to be invested in high-risk 'alternative' investments, passed the Senate (by only six votes) and passed out of the House Retirement Committee, but was never brought to the House floor for a vote. I think it's safe to say that the outcome might have been very different if so many of you had not contacted your legislators to voice your opinion of this ill-advised legislation.

Another GSRA success is that House Resolution 1271, which creates a House Study Committee on the Cost of Living Allowance for state retirees, passed the House. At GSRA's request, House members amended HR1271 to include a state retiree on the committee; and once again it was your many phone calls that helped pass this important resolution.

We have also carefully monitored various meetings of the ERS Board, TRS Board, the Board of Community Health, and Committees of both the House and Senate to stay on top of retirement and health-insurance-related issues that matter most to all state retirees, and to pass along to the membership information on the deliberations and actions of all these groups that might have a serious effect on future retiree benefits.

But GSRA cannot stop here. It would surprise no one to see Senate Bill 80 resurrected during next year's session. And the final outcome of HR1271 is of course unknown. Our health insurance benefits and any future COLAs continue to be at risk.

As there is strength in numbers, our greatest need now is to continue growing our membership base. I am asking each one of you to speak personally to at least two fellow retirees (or still active State employees) who have not yet joined GSRA, and strongly encourage them to join our group as soon as possible. Enrolling in GSRA has never been easier, and few organizations will offer so much for a minimal annual dues (still just \$15 per year!).

You will be glad to know that we now have in place guidelines for forming local chapters that we hope will spring up to blanket the state. Information about local chapters will soon be available on the website (www.MyGSRA.com). This is an exciting step forward for us and is sure to make our organization even more beneficial and accessible to all members statewide.

Another important step is that we are now mailing paper copies of newsletters and other information, on a regular basis, to those GSRA members who do not have Internet access. We don't want to leave anyone out!

If every GSRA member can make it a personal goal to recruit at least two additional members in the next 8 months, we will be in excellent shape to face the serious challenges that most certainly lie ahead. Please do your part to grow our organization!