



GSRA Members with Governor and Mrs. Deal

GSRA Day at the Capitol – Big Success!

Months of planning and hard work by many GSRA members and the Georgia County Welfare Association (GCWA) – our partner for the evening Legislative reception – plus outstanding participation by GSRA membership, paid off dramatically on January 25, 2011, GSRA Day at the Capitol. Members from throughout the state braved a cold and wet day to join together in activities designed to honor state legislators for their service and to send a positive message about GSRA members. Well over 100 members attended the day event, with sixty-one members attending the evening Legislative reception.

The day began with the group assembling at 11:00 in a large committee room in the State Capitol. Led

by David Waller and GSRA Event Coordinator, Chuck Freedman, members received a brief orientation and GSRA buttons and name tags. In addition, members received bags for distribution to legislators that included a pen and coffee mug with the GSRA logo and name, the two most recent GSRA newsletters, and an information sheet describing GSRA's purpose, objectives, and legislative goals. GSRA Legislative Committee Chair, Bill Tomlinson, assured that the attendees highlighted their visit by arranging for a group picture with the Governor and First Lady, Nathan and Sandra Deal.

Working in groups and individually throughout the afternoon, GSRA members dispersed throughout

the Capitol and Coverdell Legislative Office Building to deliver the bags to the senators and representatives who represent them, as well as those legislators for whom no GSRA member was present. Based on the earlier meeting, members were prepared to thank legislators for their service and to engage them about the members' issues.

Members were able to see the legislators "in action" when they attended the organizational meeting of the Senate Retirement Committee. Because of limited space, members rotated so that all had a chance to observe the proceedings. As evidenced by the warm recognition given by the Retirement Committee Chairman, Senator Tim Golden, our presence made exactly the impact that we had hoped.

After the committee meeting, members re-engaged legislators as the opportunity arose. Then, at 4:00, those staying for the reception joined other GSRA members at the Blue Room to await the Joint GSRA-GCWA Legislative Reception. Thirty-five legislators attended the reception and were treated to light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, as well as the perspectives of our members.

During the reception, President Bobbie Jean Bennett presented GSRA's first annual "Legislator of the Year" Award to Representative Howard Maxwell, Chairman of the House Retirement Committee. Rep. Maxwell was a staunch advocate of retirees during the 2010 General Assembly Session and throughout the

year. Also, GCWA President, Mary Beth Lukich presented "Friends of Children" Awards to Senator Renee Unterman and Steve Rumford, President/CEO of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth.



GSRA President BJ Bennett presents Rep. Maxwell with "Legislator of the Year" Award

In summary, GSRA members overcame weather and inexperience, while capitalizing on their energy and camaraderie, to make the "Day at the Capitol" very meaningful and rewarding.

Member's GSRA Day Experience – By Gerold Martin



Sandy Woods and Gerold Martin

once I arrived at the designated room at the Capitol building, I quickly joined in the effort of assembling materials for the legislators. The packets contained information about GSRA, items of immediate concern, and a coffee cup as a reminder.

On Tuesday, January 25, I took a chance at a new experience and joined a group of Georgia state retirees who visited the Capitol to participate in GSRA Day activities. A good time was had by all, including meeting long time friends and knowing the effort would be to our common benefit.

I was apprehensive at first, knowing I am not very social by nature. But, considering the great effort GSRA puts forth to keep me and other members informed, I needed to offer my support. I had little idea of how the day would play out, or how successful my contribution would be, but

The environment was very electrifying, as I realized what an effort was made by the GSRA in organizing such an event. I quickly developed a greater understanding of legislative procedures and the effort required to keep the GSRA membership informed of developments on Capitol Hill.

I eagerly joined forces with a past coworker and good friend, Mrs. Wood, in our tour to distribute material to the legislators. Each GSRA member was provided a packet for his or her local Representative, as well as others, to be sure all received information about GSRA. Mrs. Wood and I visited four legislative offices, talked to one representative about our concerns, and two secretaries who are close to retirement about joining the organization even before they retire. I was so exhilarated by the whole process! One thing for sure, we put a face to the name GSRA at the Capitol.

The legislative committees are the front line of legislative activity. GSRA coordinators made sure anyone interested could attend the Senate Retirement Committee meeting in the Capitol Building. ERS and other fund administrators were present and were recognized at the meeting. Committee discussion pointed out the fact that retirement legislation must be evaluated for cost and funding before it can even be considered for a vote.

The House Retirement Committee Chairman and other legislators attended the evening reception, which allowed the retirees time for a casual conversation. It was also a fun time to catch up with friends and make new acquaintances; faces I expect to see again in the next meeting or event.

I want to encourage all GSRA members to be involved and supportive of the organization's efforts to keep us informed and, as I saw at this event, efforts to keep the legislators informed about us as well.

GSRA Day By the Numbers

109	GSRA members attended GSRA Day at the Capitol
61	GSRA members attended Joint GSRA-GCWA Reception
28	Counties represented at GSRA Day at the Capitol
18	Counties plus one resident of Alabama represented at the Joint GSRA-GCWA Reception
31	Total Counties represented at both events
35	Legislators attended Joint GSRA-GCWA Reception
300	Packets of GSRA information and promotional items distributed during GSRA Day at the Capitol

President's Thoughts on GSRA Day

On behalf of the GSRA Officers and Board, I congratulate the members for making January 25th a great and memorable day for our Association. Not only did you impress the legislative members with your knowledge, honor and respect, but many of you have reported that the fellowship with other GSRA members challenged you to become more involved.

Of course, there were "glitches" here and there— not to mention that the weather was cold and rainy, but the important point is that all of the adversities were overcome by the members. Members have reported that the day was worth the cost and effort expended by them and by the GSRA leadership to demonstrate our resolve to educate the General Assembly of our concerns.

Although over 100 members were walking the halls and smiling at legislators – amidst the over 1,000 school children visiting the Capitol that day — the "in & out" visiting legislative offices appeared to be a much greater number. Our GSRA "buttons" on the lapels were very prominent and many legislators were eager to speak to this "new" constituency. Some members' legislators were not available, but the overwhelming majority of members talked either to their legislators or to their office staff. It was especially gratifying to walk into a legislator's office and find the GSRA coffee mug on the desk.

GSRA members became aware of the importance, during the Senate Retirement Committee meeting, of educating the legislators about members' issues. One

of the experienced legislators stated that he was frequently told that the pension benefit was a contractual obligation. He questioned the Legislative Counselor, who is assigned to the Committee, about who or what entity was making promises (contracts) for which the State is obligated. The Counselor explained that the General Assembly, through law and Constitution, is the contractor.

The events of the day demonstrated that we honored and thanked the legislators for their service. Our elected leaders reciprocated by attentiveness and hospitable concern, although they were non-committal about additional funding—as expected. Our activities

generated forward steps in strengthening positive relationships with our elected representatives and in our ability to be heard.

Members also gained an insight into the difficulty of having a legislative impact and recognized the importance of having increased membership. It was good to observe the increasing confidence exhibited by the members as they gained experience in talking with legislators. In fact, many members reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the day with the legislators and their fellow members.

Thank you for making the day a SUCCESS. Members who participated should take a BOW.

GSRA Day Recognition and Thanks

These events could not have been held without the tireless efforts of many. Recognition and thanks go to the following:

- **GCWA Executive Director Wayne Drummond**, who approached GSRA leadership with the offer to collaborate on the Joint GSRA-GCWA Legislative Reception. Since GCWA had been holding a reception on its own for many years, Wayne had built up expertise and contacts to organize and conduct the event flawlessly. His continuing cheerfulness, openness and helpfulness were invaluable to GSRA.
- **GSRA chapter presidents and associates**, who continuously built up interest in the events and worked hard to sign up members to participate in the events.
- **GSRA Day at the Capitol Committee** composed of Chuck Freedman, David Waller, Bill Tomlinson, Ernie Melton, Rachel Davis, Kaye Carter, Beverly Littlefield, Darnetta Simalton, Beth Morgan, and BJ Bennett, who provided the overall planning, logistics, coordination, and execution.

Has Your GSRA Membership Expired? Renew Today-\$15!

Just go to www.mygsra.com and point to the “Join Us” button, then click on “GSRA – Membership Renewal”. Update your personal information on the next page if you need to, and then click “Submit” at the bottom. On the next page, click on “Credit Card” and follow the instructions. As a reminder, spouses are welcome and encouraged to register.

Don't use credit cards online?

Just click on the “Send Check” option and follow the instructions carefully. Don't forget: Make sure your full name and mailing address, plus the words “MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL are on the check, payable to “Georgia State Retirees Association” and send the check to: GSRA, PO Box 2391, Newnan, GA 30264.

If you receive GSRA newsletters by US Mail and not by computer, your membership expiration date is shown above your name on the mailing label. Please renew on time by following the check-mailing instructions above. If the expiration date shown on your mailing label is incorrect, drop a note to: GSRA, PO Box 108, Bethlehem, GA 30620. Keep your membership current! Don't miss out on important news and events!!

GSRA Day in Pictures



Chuck Freedman and David Waller lead orientation



Roger Sundy, John Arrington, Tom Turner and Lewis "Peanut" Oneal



Readying the bags for delivery



Members convening at the Capitol



Beverly Littlefield and Rachel Davis man the reception desk



Senator Gail Davenport



David Waller, Rep. Howard Maxwell, BJ Bennett



Larry Hogan and David Allen



Bob and Beth Morgan, Paula and Mike Bowers



**Sen. Tim Golden, Bill Tomlinson, Rep. Lynne Riley,
Rep. Howard Maxwell, Sheila Gove**



Jim Bowen and Howard Johnson



Representative Sandra Scott



Kip Mann and Nancy Bruce



Chris West, Alan Morris, Mike Murdoch

Does GSRA Have Your Correct Contact Information?

Please be sure to update your **email address** with GSRA when it changes. Simply log in to www.mygsra.com using your old email address and password; select “Our Members” and “My Profile”, and then change your information using the “edit” feature.

If your **mailing address** changes, and you do not use a computer, please notify us of your new address by sending a card or letter to the address at the bottom of this page.