

## GSRA Prepares for Impactful 2019

The end of 2018 is rapidly approaching and, with our thoughts turning to 2019, GSRA is busy preparing for one of our most important times of the year, the Legislative Session and our signature events related to it, *GSRA Day at the Capitol* and the *GSRA/GPHSA Legislative Reception*. Being a GSRA member and participating in GSRA events has never been more important. The gains we have made in making the legislature and administration aware of state retiree issues and concerns over the last three years have contributed to some very positive wins for state ERS retirees, including three one-time pension adjustments, increased funding for the pension fund, stable SHBP plans and premiums, and a DCH/SHBP Advisory Council to represent active and retired employee interests in the SHBP.

GSRA has never lost sight, however, of the desire of all ERS retirees to get back to receiving actual COLA adjustments annually to ensure that our purchasing power

begins to be maintained again. With a new administration and new legislators taking office, we still have work to do regarding our ongoing efforts to educate our elected officials and advocate for our members. **To that end, this entire newsletter is devoted to preparing you as members to help us help you get a 3% COLA next year. We've included our goals and objectives for 2019, information about *GSRA Day at the Capitol* events (more detailed information will be distributed in early December), information regarding our important initiatives around membership, including new GSRA polo shirts you can order, help with communicating with your state elected officials, etc.**

Please use this newsletter to familiarize yourself with the upcoming events, help you become more comfortable talking with your legislators, and help all of us support getting back to annual COLAs!



**GSRA Day at the Capitol February 6, 2019  
WE NEED YOU!**

**How many times have you heard this?  
It is more vital than ever this year.**

Please mark your calendars now and make plans to attend the annual *GSRA Day at the Capitol* Wednesday, February 6, 2019, followed in the evening by the *GPHSA/GSRA Legislative Reception* in the Empire Room of the Floyd

Building. GSRA has advocated for member benefits, and we have made progress during the past three legislative sessions, but much remains to be accomplished and this can only be done with the full and active support of all GSRA

members. We need to double our membership numbers, and the BOGO (buy one year and get one year free), which is available through December 31, is an easy and economical way to encourage and engage new members.

The 2019 General Assembly will convene January 7, but we must start our grassroots efforts before then if we are to succeed with our goals and finally attain a true COLA. Our (your) benefits are at stake, and we need you to advocate for protection of these benefits and for a COLA. With a new governor, new lieutenant governor and approximately one-third of the General Assembly members being new, our tasks are limitless and challenging. We need to inform, educate and advocate, but we cannot do this with only partial membership support and advocacy. We need *all* members.

During the next few months, you have the opportunity to make a difference and the difference you make is up to you. The official announcement and registration for GSRA Day will be sent out the first week of December and will include details for registering and for the Day's events. Additionally, please watch for Action Alerts which require members to take action to support or oppose legislative action. We have heard from legislators that they do listen to their constituents; however, they pay more attention to personalized messages so please review all Alerts and then personalize your message.

We look forward to this being our greatest attendance and participation ever!

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## GSRA Membership Activities

As we get ready for the new year, a lot is going on with GSRA and its members. The next session of the state legislature is fast approaching, and your Board is planning for us to have a very successful session! Here are several items that should make our presence more visible and our efforts more successful.

### New Member Incentive: Buy One/Get One Year Free Membership

The **Buy One/Get One Year Membership Free** remains in effect for **new** members thru **December 31, 2018**. So tell all fellow retirees you know who are not presently members and current state employees who might want to be members to join **before** January 1, 2019. Since May 1 when this offer started through mid-November, **313** new members have taken advantage of this offer. That's an average of over **48** new members a month. The four months prior to this period we averaged about **20** new members per month. So the BOGO has more than doubled our new members signing up. Keep up the good work these last two months!

The more members we have the stronger our voice will be as we advocate for our **3% COLA**, a raise for current state employees and other issues important to GSRA members, so continue to spread the word among retirees and in local state offices in your areas that membership is important so join up for the next two years for only **\$20.00**,

and see what our organization can do for you. Tell them, **it's a small investment in their future!**

### Legislative Day at the Capitol!

GSRA's Legislative Day at the Capitol is set for February 6, 2019 and members are asked to arrive at the meeting room at 9:00 am in Room CLOB Room # 406, of the Legislative Office Building to receive instructions for the day's activities, and to receive information to distribute during the day.

Now is the time to make plans to attend. Block this day on your calendar and contact your state Representative and Senator to wish them a Happy Thanksgiving and send them a Christmas Card. While doing these things be sure to mention GSRA's 2019 Goals and Objectives (See the article referencing these in this newsletter), and invite them to meet with you during the Holidays at their convenience or at the Capitol on February 6, 2019.

This should be our best year to achieve the reinstatement of our 3% COLA, and these first steps are necessary to insure success. Read further for other matters of importance for our success!

### GSRA Polo Shirts

As stated earlier, our special day at the Georgia Capitol is set for February 6, 2019. We want to look our best and

present our case clearly.

To make this day extra special and to clearly denote who we are, the GSRA Board has decided to note this occasion by asking a local vendor to emboss our GSRA Logo on men's and women's short and long sleeve polo shirts. When we as members attend official functions such as Legislative Day at the Capitol, local chapter legislative breakfasts, local chapter meetings, recruiting events at state and local professional association meetings, annual professional conferences, local offices of state agencies this shirt will also come in handy. It will provide us with a distinctive look which can be paired with other suitable attire such as khaki slacks and a navy sport coat for men or slacks/skirt and coat for women.

The polos come in men's and women's sizes. (See pictures on the order form). The initial order will be done at cost, and will be submitted to the vendor by January 7, 2019 so that shirts will be available for distribution at the Legislative Day at the Capitol on February 6, 2019. For the initial order, the price of the shirts will be \$16.00 for men's and women's short sleeve shirts and \$20.00 for men's long sleeve shirts, and \$22.00 for women's long sleeve shirts.

**(See link on how to purchase shirts on order form below. Note: The mail in process is working now. The online process is coming soon.)**

We will continue to take orders for these shirts, but after the first order GSRA will charge a handling and distribution fee for each shirt purchased. Shirts may also be available for order at future Annual Meetings and local chapter meetings, but we need to achieve the initial order of 100 shirts before we can move to the next phase; hence the sale at cost for the first 100 shirts or the initial order whichever is more. Deadline for making these purchases is January 1, 2019.

### Summary

As you can see this is to be a busy time of the year for us! It's also a very critical time for us so we need to get busy if we want more than coal in our stocking for next Christmas! Remember, we still have one more scheduled one-time adjustment of up to \$600.00 coming in February of 2019, and let's work hard to have our next adjustment to our retirement benefit be a 3% COLA in July of 2019. Go Members!

## Communicating with Legislators

Communicating with your legislators is a straightforward process which can have a big impact on the way they make decisions. Elected officials are very responsive to the voices of their constituents because those people hold them accountable. Phone calls, e-mails, or text messages to your legislators can carry tremendous weight and can influence legislative decision-making. In order to be an effective representative of GSRA, you should look to the following guidelines:

Develop a relationship with your elected officials. Introduce yourself and tell them about your interests and the interests of GSRA. You can determine who your elected official is by entering your address at the link below.

- OpenStates.org – [http://openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator/](http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/).

- Contact legislators via phone or mail to express your opinions. Information for legislators can be found at the following links:
  - House – <http://www.house.ga.gov/Representatives/en-US/HouseMembersList.aspx>
  - Senate – <http://www.senate.ga.gov/senators/en-US/SenateMembersList.aspx>
- Tell your legislator how much you appreciate what they have done for us in past sessions. The 3% one-time adjustments in 2016 and 2017, and last year when they provided wording that encouraged the Employees Retirement System to grant two one-time adjustments on annual benefits of the first \$30,000 of annual retirement benefits that were granted in August of 2018 and the second will be received in February of 2019.

- Remind legislators that GSRA is a great resource for information on State issues relating to pensions and retirement. Encourage them to learn more about the organization and attend GSRA events.
- Visit the State Capitol at any time during the legislative session. The House and Senate floor sessions take place in the morning, while Committees meet in various locations during the afternoon hours. The Committee schedules, which are updated regularly, can be found at the following links:
  - House Committees – <http://calendar.legis.ga.gov/Calendar/?Chamber=House>
  - Senate Committees – <http://calendar.legis.ga.gov/Calendar/?Chamber=Senate>
- Educate yourself on the issues being debated at the General Assembly. Oftentimes legislators spend too much time debating highly political issues, which leaves less time to consider other legislation. The General Assembly only meets for 40 days each year, so it is important that constituents keep them on track.
- Invite legislators to Chapter meetings and other GSRA events. Such meetings are a perfect time to build relationships and voice your concerns. Make sure to invite them to GSRA Day at the Capitol!
- Keep meetings brief and try to stay on point during conversations with legislators. With only 40 days in the session, it is important to be respectful of their time.
- Thank them for their time and service to the State of Georgia.

### GSRA Goals and Objectives for 2019

- Obtain a **3% COLA for ERS Retirees**
- Ensure **SHBP insurance rates and benefits remain the same with no increased cost in premiums or out of pocket expenses.**
- Strengthen the role of the **DCH Advisory Council** to provide input to the decision making process regarding SHBP Member Benefits prior to presentation to the Board of Community Health.
- Ensure passage of legislation that protects **against surprise medical billing** for patients when receiving medical care from an in-network provider in an in-network facility even if other medical personnel may be out-of-network contract employees.
- Recommend and support a **5% across the board pay raise for all active state employees and teachers.**
- Support any Tax Reform which does not adversely affect retirees or low and middle income Georgians and does not hinder the ability of the state of Georgia to provide essential services and meet financial responsibilities and obligations.

## **Letter to GSRA Members Regarding Support**

To:GSRA Members

From:Jim Sommerville, Incoming President

Steve Herndon, Outgoing President

Kip Mann, Membership Chair

Re: It's That Time of Year Again!

During this Holiday Season and while making plans for a Happy New Year, it's time to plan for improving your financial security for years to come.

For our success in the coming year it will be important for us to contact our local legislators and thank them for their efforts the past three years to award us one-time adjustments to our retirement benefits of up to \$900.00 in 2016 and 2017, and two one-time adjustment in 2018 of up to \$600.00 each. We should also thank them for maintaining our health insurance at essentially the same level and cost.

Then we need to gear up for the next session that begins in January 2019. Also included with this email is our 2019 Goals and Objectives. In addition to requesting a 3% COLA for ERS retirees, we are requesting that our current health benefits and premiums be maintained, and support a 5% raise for current state employees and teachers.

Your charge as a GSRA member is to:

1. Contact your local legislators and thank them for what they've done in the past especially the last two years by either sending them a seasons greeting card or e-mail;
2. Give your legislators a copy of our 2019 Goals and Objectives for the coming year;
3. Attend our Legislative Day at the Capitol on February 6, 2019 and our Legislative Reception that evening in conjunction with our sister organization GPHSA where we will present our Legislative Service Award for the past year;
4. Encourage your legislators to join us on February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Legislative Reception from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm in the Empire Room on the 20<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Floyd Building;
5. If you are going to attend the morning activities and/or Reception, tell your legislator that you'll meet him there, and will talk with him during the day of the event and/or that night;
6. Coordinate your transportation plans with officers from your local chapter so that you may receive reimbursement to the GSRA Legislative Day activities at the Capitol (if allowed according to current GSRA policy and local Chapter plans) so that our efforts this year will be visually supported.

This year presents another opportunity to improve conditions for present employees and retirees who work or have worked to provide the best services possible to the people of Georgia. We hope that all of our combined efforts will make our goals a reality. We and the GSRA Board and Planning and Operations Committee look forward to working with you and your local chapters to make this a reality.

GSRA Polo Shirt Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel#: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Chapter Where Member: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Item #1 QTY: \_\_\_\_\_ Type Shirt: Men's Short Sleeve Shirt

Price each: \$16.00 each Size: \_\_\_\_\_ XS, S, M, L, XL, \$2.50 extra 2XL-6XL

Sub-Total # shirts x \$16 + \$2.50 upcharge (if any) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Item #2 QTY: \_\_\_\_\_ Type Shirt: Men's Long Sleeve Shirt

Price each: \$20.00 each Size: \_\_\_\_\_ XS, S, M, L, XL, \$2.50 extra 2XL-4XL

Sub-Total # shirts x \$20 + \$2.50 upcharge (if any) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Item #3 QTY: \_\_\_\_\_ Type Shirt: Women's Short Sleeve Shirt

Price each: \$16.00 each Size: \_\_\_\_\_ XS, S, M, L, XL, \$2.50 extra 2XL-6XL

Sub-Total # shirts x \$16 + \$2.50 upcharge (if any) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Item #4 QTY: \_\_\_\_\_ Type Shirt: Women's Long Sleeve Shirt

Price each: \$22.00 each Size: \_\_\_\_\_ XS, S, M, L, XL, \$2.50 extra 2XL-4XL

Sub-Total # shirts x \$22+ \$2.50 upcharge (if any) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Total (of All sub-Totals Items 1-4 above): \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\*Mail check for this amount made out to GSRA to: GSRA, P.O. Box 108, Bethlehem, GA 30620

[Click here for instructions for ordering](#)

**Please Note: Online process is coming soon. Mail and chapter ordering is ready now.**



**Anthem** 


## Take a new look at an old friend

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Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare Plan of Georgia, Inc. Independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc.

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## YOU ARE OUR PRIORITY

OUR MEMBERS FORM THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

Since 1920, we've guided ourselves on helping members build a solid financial foundation for their own families.

We're not salespeople, we're solutions people. That's why nobody can serve our members like we can.

APCU serves State and Federal workers, retirees and their families in Georgia. Visit APCU's exhibitor table at GSRA. For more information, visit [apcu.com](http://apcu.com), or call us at (404) 768-4125 or Toll-free at (800) 848-8431.



**APCU**  
 Atlanta Postal Credit Union  
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**SERVING** U.S. Postal Service Employees • State & Federal Employees in GA • Retirees & Their Family Members

This credit union is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration.

APCU partners with Members Wealth Management, a financial services program, to help our members with financial planning, investments, insurance, as well as retirement and estate planning strategies.

APCU has invited Shawn Roman, a Managing Associate with Members Wealth Management, to offer a great workshop, "Money Talk 101," at GSRA. This seminar is designed to facilitate conversations around financial milestones for retirees.

Topics will include:

- ★ The importance of setting financial goals
- ★ Understanding your current financial position
- ★ Preparing for a successful retirement
- ★ Income tax considerations
- ★ What your loved ones need to know

## SHBP RETIREES, OUR ADVANTAGE IS YOUR SATISFACTION.



**Medicare Advantage Plans from UnitedHealthcare®**

**UnitedHealthcare® Medicare Advantage plans achieve over 97% satisfaction\* with SHBP retirees.**

UnitedHealthcare continues to be a proud sponsor of the GSRA Annual Meeting for 2018.



\*2015 UnitedHealthcare Customer Experience Survey scores for Group Medicare Advantage plan members. Plans are insured through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or one of its affiliated companies, a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in the plan depends on the plan's contract renewal with Medicare.

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