

## **Help Us Help You!**

Participate in:

***GSRA Day at the Capitol and/or GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception***

**February 6, 2019**

**Capitol Hill, Atlanta**

**Right now, the budget released by the Kemp Administration shows raises/COLAs for active state employees and educators and retired teachers, but no COLA for ERS retirees. A strong showing by GSRA members at both events will definitely aid GSRA efforts to try and change this outcome.**

**Information for both events/Registration for Reception**

**Maximize your time, convenience and/or cost by taking Marta, Uber or carpool to the GSRA Day events.**

## **GSRA and GPHSA Announce Annual Awards Recipients**

Every year at the *GSRA/GPHSA Legislative Reception* to honor Georgia legislators, both organizations bestow awards on those legislators/persons who in their estimation have provided support above and beyond to each association's goals and objectives in the previous year. GSRA and GPHSA recently announced their award recipients to be specially honored at this year's reception.

GSRA's *Legislative Service Award* will be presented to Speaker of the House David Ralston. Speaker Ralston guided the House through some perilous times, exercising a strong voice of reason and moderation to the benefit of all Georgians. He has consistently reached across the aisle in forming consensus. He was also of great assistance to GSRA in advising for and supporting a resolution to create a State Health Benefit Plan Consumer Advisory Council.

GPHSA announced its awardees for its *GPHSA 2019 Friend of Children* award; they are Representative Terry England and well-known radio, television, and social media personality Clark Howard. The Honorable Terry England is the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee. His leadership on the budget has supported tremendous post-recession funding to Georgia's educational system. His leadership has also supported significant improvements in Georgia's child welfare system. Clark Howard is a nationally recognized consumer advocate with a large following in television, radio, and social media. For many years he has worked tirelessly to assure that Georgia's foster children are surrounded by our community at Christmas. This is one of the most difficult times of the year for a child in foster care and his efforts to assist them have also greatly raised awareness of the needs of children. GSRA and GPHSA will present the awards to all three gentlemen at an awards ceremony during the *GSRA/GPHSA Legislative Reception* at approximately 6:00 pm on February 6, 2019.

## GSRA’s 2019 Goals and Objectives Reiterated

GSRA annually identifies its goals and objectives for the upcoming year and has those ratified by members in attendance at the Annual Meeting. It then makes those available to the full membership by publishing in the newsletter, which occurred in the November 2018 issue. In anticipation of the upcoming GSRA Day events, we are

providing them again, plus a timeline regarding the lack of ERS retiree COLAs, to aid members to speak with authority in their interactions with legislators about these important points/issues.

### 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 that 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.

### **COLA History from ERS Website with FY 19 Update by GSRA**

FY 19	Two 2% one-time adjustments non-compounded payment for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on the first \$30,000 of annual pension benefit (each up to \$600).	FY 18	3% one-time adjustment, non-compounded payment for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on the first \$30,000 of annual pension benefit (up to \$900).
FY 17	3% one-time adjustment, non-compounded payment for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on the first \$30,000 of annual pension benefit (up to \$900).	FY 16	No COLAs granted

FY 15	No COLAs granted	FY 14	No COLAs granted
FY 13	No COLAs granted	FY 12	No COLAs granted
FY 11	No COLAs granted	FY 10	A bonus of 1.5% of the annual benefit payable October 2009—this was a one-time check not compounded on the monthly benefit
FY 09	A total of 2% was granted (1% payable July 2008 and 1% January 2009)	FY 08	A total of 2% was granted (1.5% payable July 2007 and .5% January 2008)
FY 07	A total of 3% was granted 2.5% payable July 2007 and 1.5% January 2007		



## Jim's View: How to Help GSRA Help You

This is a very important time for GSRA. The new Governor has just taken office and the 2019 session of the General Assembly is underway. The leadership of GSRA has been hard at work spreading our message to legislators and state leaders. We are still waiting for our promised meeting with the new Governor. Our contacts within the Governor's Office have assured us that the meeting will take place.

I get asked a lot about how one can help GSRA leadership in getting our goals accomplished. Here are two ways that your support and participation will be needed.

We need as many members as possible to attend our *GSRA Day at the Capitol* events (February 6th), especially the legislative reception scheduled for the early evening

hours (5-7 p.m.). It is important that we have a large turnout for the reception. I encourage you to register and attend the reception where you can voice your concerns as well as honor your legislators.

You can also help by responding to action alerts received from GSRA. It is critical that we get as many people to respond to these alerts as possible. These action alerts are an effective tool for GSRA in getting our point across to our state leaders. Regretfully, many members don't even open the Action Alerts, much less respond to them. Help us change that!

Your support of GSRA is appreciated. It does make a difference!!

Jim

### GSRA Polo Shirts Delivery Update

Members who ordered shirts before the 1/6/19 deadline can notify Kip Mann at [kipmann@bellsouth.net](mailto:kipmann@bellsouth.net) if they want to pick up their shirts at the *GSRA Day at the Capitol* events if they plan to attend. Otherwise, they will be distributed to chapter representatives at the next GSRA board meeting or mailed.

**Thank you for your support!**

## Second ERS Retiree Bonus Payment Due in February

As a reminder, the second of two bonus payments awarded to ERS Retirees in 2018 will occur in February. The following excerpt is taken straight from the ERS website.

### February 2019 Payment

During the Annual Board meetings on April 19, 2018, the Boards of Trustees for the Employees' Retirement System (ERS), the Legislative Retirement System (LRS), and the Judicial Retirement System (JRS) considered whether to grant post-retirement benefit adjustments to retirees and beneficiaries in fiscal year 2019. Actions taken by the Boards for February 2019 are as follows:

#### Employees' Retirement System (ERS)

**Approved:** A 2% one-time, non-compounded payments for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on the first \$30,000 of annual pension benefit, with the following stipulations:

- non-disability retirees must be at least 45 years of age or older
- disability retirees have no age restrictions
- not available to GSEPS retirees with a membership date on or after 7/1/2009 (This group is specifically excluded by statute from receiving post retirement adjustment payments.)
- Early Retirement Exception: Post retirement adjustment eligibility is based on attaining age 60, or the date 30 years would have been attained if continuous employment had continued, whichever is earlier

The payment will be paid during the first week of February 2019 for eligible retirees with a retirement effective date on or before 6/1/2018 and a pension benefit in January 2019.

### *Many thanks!*

*To the following individuals who graciously volunteered their time to represent GSRA at ERS WRAP sessions during the past year:*

**John Arrington  
Tom Hill  
Ernie Melton  
Mike Murdock**

**Chris Primrose  
Glenda Saleem  
David Taylor**

*In sincere appreciation for all of your efforts, hard work and assistance. We couldn't have done it without you!*

**-Janet Blackmon and GSRA Leadership**

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