

GSRA 2021 Annual Meeting



Georgia Veterans State Park, Oct. 4-5

GSRA Achieves Historic First!

In the April edition, we reported that GSRA had its first ever legislation, HB 173, passed out of the Legislature and on to the Office of the Governor for signing. On May 10, 2021, in what was a significant and historic first for our association, Governor Brian Kemp signed into law HB 173, which is now Act 271 of the 2021-2022 legislative session. This is significant for two reasons, as outlined below.

From hereafter, the ERS Board must consider candidates submitted by GSRA when incumbent trustees seek to select new members for the two positions which they are charged to elect. Act 271 only requires that GSRA nominations be considered. It does not mandate that one of our submitted candidates be appointed. Nonetheless, the new law for the first time provides GSRA a long sought avenue for having more insight into ERS Board considerations and more input into the board's decisions.

Governor Kemp signing into law HB 173 is a crowning achievement for GSRA. It is the first time that a bill originated by GSRA has been passed by both the House and Senate and then signed by the Governor. It also signifies the

increased respect and reputation that GSRA enjoys in the highest levels of state government.

GSRA appreciates the continued support of both the House and Senate retirement committees, the chairs of both committees, those legislators who voted on the floor for the bill, and Governor Kemp and his staff. We also owe a huge debt to our professional legislative liaison, Chuck Clay, for tirelessly working the halls and offices of both the Capitol and the Coverdale Legislative Office Building. GSRA also appreciates any of our members who lobbied their legislators or the Governor's Office on behalf of the bill.

This event is a highlight of GSRA's efforts to educate and advocate on behalf of State of Georgia retirees, and gives us renewed impetus to push ahead with other important retiree issues.

ERS Announces Schedule for One-Time “Bonus” Payments

ERS recently announced the schedule for the payment of the two 3% one-time ‘bonus’ payments for retirees and beneficiaries, payable on the first \$30,000 of annual pension benefit.

The first payment will be paid during the first week of August 2021 for eligible retirees with a retirement date on or before 12/1/2020 and a pension benefit in July 2021.

The second payment will be paid during the first week of February 2022 for eligible retirees with a retirement effective date on or before 6/1/2021 and a pension benefit in January 2022.

As a reminder, ERS placed the following stipulations on the awarding of these two one-time bonuses:

- Non-disability retirees must be at least 45 years old;
- Disability retirees have no age restrictions;
- GSEPS retirees with a membership date on or after July 1, 2009 are not eligible for this post retirement benefit (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.



Jim's View: When One Door Closes...

There is an old saying that when one door closes another door opens up. I am not sure that is always the case, but that is what recently happened to GSRA.

The door closing was the ERS Board's decision at its April meeting not to discuss, consider, or vote on awarding a cost of living adjustment (COLA) to retired state employees. It seemed at the time that the Board was shutting the door on COLAs, not just for this year, but for the foreseeable future. After all, the economic position of the State of Georgia and the ERS Fund is so bright now that you need sunglasses to look at it. If not this year, then what would it take for the ERS Board to do what is right and restore the COLAs? So I felt a sense of profound disappointment in the results of the April ERS Board meeting.

But, as the saying goes, another door was being opened. A really big door was about to be opened for us. That door, of course, was the door to the Governor's Office. As you know, a meeting we had with the Governor in April that was expected to be about HB 173 was in fact about COLAs.

Needless to say, my disappointment quickly changed to excitement at the opportunity to have a frank discussion on

COLAs with Governor Kemp and his policy advisors. To add to my excitement was that this was a meeting that the Governor's Office instigated. We did not have to ask for the meeting. They reached out to us.

The meeting was another in a series of “firsts” for GSRA this year. You have read elsewhere in this newsletter about our success in having HB 173 signed into law.

These “firsts” are a tribute to the support given by GSRA members year after year. None of this would be possible without the support of GSRA members. Your support year after year provided GSRA with the financial resources to engage the services of a legislative lobbyist. Your quick responses to our Action Alerts and your attendance at the GSRA Day at the Capitol events have made the legislators and Governor's Office respect and seek the input of GSRA on issues of importance to retired state employees.

As a result of your support, GSRA's profile at the Capitol has increased. We are being sought out by members of both parties for our input. HB 173 was near death on several occasions during the legislative session. Each time things looked grim, one or more legislators came to our

assistance and found a way to get our bill passed. We did not have to ask them for help.

Changing gears, I want to bring you up to date on GSRA’s Strategic Planning process. We are in the process of finalizing a member survey questionnaire. We are currently road testing the online questionnaire. We should be finished very soon. So please be on the lookout for an email from GSRA (or it may be from the Fanning Institute at the University of Georgia) with a questionnaire for you to

complete. We need your truthful and frank answers to the survey questions in order to ensure that the strategic planning process comes to a successful conclusion.

I want to thank you for your consistent and unwavering support of GSRA. It makes a big impact, I assure you. Take care, stay safe, and I hope to see you at our Annual Meeting in October.

Jim

Make Your Plans Now for the 2021 Annual Meeting

Come join us at Lake Blackshear Resort at Veterans Memorial State Park for the 2021 Annual Meeting: *A Celebration of Life, Friendship and a Return to our Mission*, on October 4th and 5th, 2021. While plans are still being finalized, we do know that we’ll start on Monday, October 4th, at 10:00 AM.

The Lake Blackshear Resort is offering GSRA members a special \$95 a night room rate from Sunday through Tuesday night, as well as a special \$119 rate for two bedroom lakeside cottages.

You can make reservations on-line or by phone. To get this low rate, reservations must be made by September 10, 2021. For on-line reservations, go to the resort website, www.lakeblackshearresort.com. In the upper right-hand corner click on the **orange box**: Lowest Rate Guaranteed BOOK ONLINE. Enter your arrival date and select the number of room nights. Enter Group ID: 368889. Click on

Check Now: Click on **Book Now**, then complete the required information to make your reservation.

For telephone reservations, call 800-459-1230 and ask for group block 368889. **Reservations for the event should be made by individual attendees directly with the hotel prior to the cut-off date of September 10th.** All guests should identify themselves as a member of GSRA in order to obtain the association’s special rate.

The hotel will accept reservations from attendees after Friday, September 10, 2021 only on a space and rate available basis.

Lake Blackshear Resort is a beautiful place that offers boat rentals, golf, a restaurant and café, hiking trails, and more.

Stay tuned to our Facebook page, website, and upcoming editions of the newsletter for continuing updates regarding the Annual Meeting program and registration.

It will be great to see everybody again!

March/April New Members

Name	City	Name	City	Name	City
March		Dee Taylor	Glynn	Shirley Ford	Toombs
Donna Bishop	Henry	Kevin Boyles	Wayne	Willie Hardrick	Peach
Robert Steed	Fayette	Melanie Poole	Walton	Jeanne Manko	Gwinnett
Cynthia Harrison	DeKalb	Deloris Graves-Davis	Liberty	Lynn Campbell	Troup
John Wikle	Habersham	April		Nancy Purvis	Tattnall
Clarence Taliaferro	Dougherty	Cathy Williams	Cherokee	Pixie Gray	Habersham

Don Head	Cobb	Kirk Kaiser	Gwinnett	Chandler Rosenberger	Oconee
Ira Cox	Gwinnett	Myrna Williams	Paulding	Carol Seabolt	Hall
Marcus Sanders	Thomas	Patricia Guthrie	Houston	Susan Boatwright	Oconee
Elaine Tucker	Troup	Reginald Evans	Fulton	Francis Sharpe	Toombs
Lauren Bryant	Early	Rodney Gardner, Sr.	Terrell	Christina Garrett	Oconee
Roger Cundiff	Coweta	Sandra Williams	Richmond	Mary Havick	Oconee
Charles Jackson	Lee	Carol Winstead	Gwinnett	Mercedes Bailey	Wilkes
Ann Smith	Gwinnett	Joyce Christian	Laurens	Ashley Parham	Whitfield
Brenda Stokes	Chatham	Julia Califf	Glynn	Scott Wilbanks	Lumpkin
Flora Liggins	Baldwin	Nancy Hunnewell	Effingham	Jonathon Barrett	Union
Kandace Futch	Bacon	Stephanie Tallent	Walker	Richard Doyle	McIntosh
Steve Blackwell	White	Donald McCullers	Laurens		
Wayne Simpson	Ware	Theinraja Raja	Fulton		
Raiford Chassereau	Candler	Katherine Verdon	Gwinnett		
Amy Burt	Baldwin	Paul Jones	Troup		
Frank Pride	Muscogee	Stan Wise	Cobb		
Johnnie Rudd	Paulding	Victoria Archer	Fulton		



Donate to GSRA Legal Fund

GSRA's Legal Fund was established as a dedicated legal fund in the event that leadership, on behalf of its members, ever has to retain legal counsel. The fund will be used to cover all appropriate legal fees related to ensuring that retiree benefits are not reduced or eliminated.

Every donation makes a difference. For more information and to donate to this fund click on the link below.

[GSRA Legal Fund](#)



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YOU ARE OUR PRIORITY

OUR MEMBERS FORM **THE FOUNDATION** OF THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

Since 1926, 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 exhibit table at GSRA. For more information, visit apcu.com, or call us at (404) 768-4125 or toll-free at (800) 847-9431.



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

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