



Newsletter

Vol. 15, Number 6

www.MyGSRA.com

June 2021

GSRA 2021 Annual Meeting Georgia Veterans State Park, Oct. 4-5

Hotel Reservations: www.lakeblackshearresort.com or 800-459-1230, use Group ID – 368889 Stay tuned for detailed Annual Meeting information and registration in July

Senate Retirement Bill Passes Key Hurdle

On June 4th, the Senate Retirement Committee met to discuss and vote on whether to submit certain proposed bills for an actuary study. This approval is a key step for any legislation that deals with the state's retirement systems and has fiscal impact (i.e., might cost the retirement system money).

One of the bills under consideration by the Senate Retirement Committee was Senator Nan Orrock's bill (Senate Bill 167) that would mandate 3% annual cost of living adjustments (referred to as "COLAs") for all qualified retired state employees and their beneficiaries. SB167 also effectively removes from statute the prohibition against COLAs for those members retiring under the GSEPS retirement plan.

A "No" vote would have doomed the bill to failure. A "yes" vote would allow the bill to be considered in the upcoming 2022 legislative session.

Senator Orrock, GSRA President Jim Sommerville, and Department of Labor retiree Jim DeLoach spoke before the Senate Retirement Committee in support of the bill. Notably, no one spoke before the committee in opposition of the bill. It should be noted that Jim Potvin, Executive Director of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia (ERS), was in attendance. In addition, when Senate Retirement Committee Chairman Senator Randy Robertson brought the proposed bill for discussion, none of the

members of the committee spoke against the bill or raised any questions or issues concerning the bill.

To our great relief, the Senate Retirement Committee voted unanimously to forward the bill to the actuaries for an actuarial study.

As Chairman Robertson told GSRA representatives after the meeting, this action by the committee is one of if not the most substantial actions taken by the legislature to benefit ERS retirees.

While this is a key step for the proposed bill to achieve, the bill will still need to be approved by the Senate Retirement Committee and passed by both chambers of the legislature, and then not be vetoed by the Governor, before it can become law.

A lot of hard work still remains to be done in order to see SB167 signed into law. But the bipartisan vote by the Senate Retirement Committee to forward SB167 for actuarial review is a starting point towards getting COLAs restored for retired state employees and towards improving the GSEPS retirement plan for current active state employees.

ERS retirees owe a great deal of thanks and gratitude to Senator Nan Orrock, Senator Randy Robertson, and the other members of the Senate Retirement Committee for the historic steps that they have taken in 2021.

ERS Board Meeting in June

On June 17th, the ERS Board of Trustees held their last meeting of the current fiscal year (the fiscal year began on July 1, 2020 and ends on June 30, 2021). Although no major decisions are normally made by the ERS Board at their June meeting, there were a couple of notable items that occurred at that meeting.

Board Chair Eli Niepoky, whose current term ends on June 30, 2021, was elected to another four year term on the Board. In addition, Ms. Niepoky was elected to another one year term as Chair of the ERS Board of Trustees.

Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services and current Board member Alex Atwood was elected to serve a one year term as Vice-Chair of the ERS Board.

The most important items of interest to retired state employees to come out of this meeting were Jim Potvin's statements that the return on investment for the ERS Fund as of Jun 16, 2021 is in excess of 28% and that the Fund has grown close to \$3 billion in the current fiscal year (an increase of almost 22%).



Jim's View: Thanks for your strong response!

I probably should not be surprised by the support that GSRA receives from its members. After all, time after time

GSRA members have responded to a call for support. Whether it is for responses to an Action Alert, attendance at GSRA events, or for sending letters to the Governor, GSRA members have always responded in great numbers when we have asked for their support.

But, I was anxious about the response we would receive to our recent request for you to complete a questionnaire as part of our strategic planning effort. To be honest, I was not too hopeful that we would receive sufficient responses to our questionnaire to make it useful in the strategic planning process.

Boy was I wrong! We received over 900 completed questionnaires. The folks at the University of Georgia (UGA), who do strategic planning for a living, told us that your response to the questionnaire was the best response in terms of number of responses that they can recall ever receiving from a questionnaire. We cannot thank you enough for the overwhelming number of responses to the questionnaire!

So, I come before you to ask for your forgiveness for doubting the level of support you would provide for our strategic planning process. After almost three years as President, I should have known better than to doubt your level of support for GSRA.

As for the strategic planning process itself, things are moving along right on schedule. The folks at UGA are currently compiling and analyzing the data from the questionnaire and are conducting a series of stakeholder interviews. Thank you to those GSRA members and affiliates who volunteered to be interviewed by UGA. Also, the Strategic Planning Committee has completed its work on developing new Mission and Vision statements for GSRA. The Strategic Planning Committee will be meeting and working throughout the summer months to finalize a proposed strategic plan.

Take care, and have a great 4th of July celebration. Stay safe and THANK YOU for your continuing strong support of GSRA.

Jim

Get to Know Your GSRA Organization Members

In an effort to provide membership more information about the various GSRA Board and Operating Committee members who perform the ongoing work of the organization, we will feature one or more board and/or committee members in the newsletter as space permits. This month, Bob Pollock, longtime Southwest Georgia local chapter President and GSRA Board Member, is featured.



Bob Pollock

Southwest Georgia LC President and GSRA Board Member

Robert (Bob) Pollock joined GSRA in 2008. He is a long time Southwest Georgia local chapter President and active member of the GSRA Board/Policy and Operations Committee. He has served GSRA in many leadership roles.

Bob was born in Bainbridge, Georgia and attended public school in Thomasville, Georgia. After receiving a BA degree in Sociology from Valdosta State University, he served in the Navy 1969-1973.

In September 1973, Bob began his career with the State of Georgia. His work experience included: Casework with the Dougherty County Department of Family and Children Services; Agent, and Regional Manager with the Office of Child Support Enforcement; Dougherty County Department

of Family and Children Services Director; and Middle Georgia Regional DFCS Director.

When asked why he joined GSRA, Bob shared that throughout his career he had worked with many dedicated, hard-working state employees who worked with heavy workloads for below standard salaries. They performed these duties because of their dedication, and with the expectations of retirement benefits that would meet their future needs. With no COLA in the past 12 years, these retirees have been shortchanged.

Bob saw GSRA's main goal of advocating for retired and active public employees as an opportunity to support past and present public employees. He believes that GSRA can make a difference.

Local Chapter News

Savannah/Coastal

The Savannah Coastal Chapter had a joyous return to in-person meetings on June 24 at Carey Hilliard's Restaurant in Savannah. Twenty-nine members greeted each other warmly, enjoyed a satisfying lunch, and heard an informative presentation by Patsy Grainger, COO of Senior Citizens, Inc. of Savannah. Senior Citizens offers a number of programs for seniors, including Meals on Wheels, in home care, adult day care and adult learning. It was great to see so many old friends and a number of new ones and a lot of socializing went on. We look forward to doing it again!



May New Members

Name	County		Name	County		Name	County
Baynard Kellie	Morgan		Sheila Shook	Rabun		Wanda Rogers	Pike
Kathy Ruddy	Out of state		Deborah Swinford	Not given		Roger Lane	Thomas
Thomas Wilson	Peach		Cassandra Zuber	Not given		Ed Brooks, Jr.	Talbot
Mary McFolley	Muscogee		William Mixon	Lee		Deborah Redd	Henry
Mathew Kelley	Bleckley		Joni Reece	Lowndes		Debra Marazio	Gwinnett
Kenneth Appleberry	DeKalb		Wesley Morris	Newton		Sullivan Beasley	Taliaferro
Nancy Rumph	Lee		Janet Henderson	Not given		Angelia Newell	Fulton
Amy Stancil	Newton		Sheila Rankins	Fulton		George McGahee	Chatham
Carmen Salgado	DeKalb		Daisy Miller	Fulton		Martha Thompson	Henry
Deborah Smith	Fulton		Marian Murphy-Dudley	Bibb			



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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APCU partners with Members Health 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 Sherrill Ransom, a Managing Associate with Members Health Management, to offer a great workshop, "Money Talk 101," at GSRA. This seminar is designed to facilitate conversations around financial education 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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