



Newsletter

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www.MyGSRA.com

September 2021

Annual Meeting will be Virtual Again

Due to the surge in the Delta variant of COVID, the GSRA Board made the painful decision to scrap plans for the 2021 Annual Meeting scheduled for Lake Blackshear Resort on October 4 and 5. Instead, the Annual Meeting will again be virtual. The Board will record the Plenary Session via ZOOM, with motions for votes for:

- the [2022 slate of officers and Board members](#);
- approval of the [2020 Treasurer's Report](#);
- acceptance of the [2020 Annual Meeting minutes](#).

The nominees for officers and the Board, the Treasurer's Report, and the 2020 business meeting minutes will be posted to the GSRA website (www.mygsra.com) on September 30, 2021. Also on that date, GSRA will email a ballot so members can vote on the motions for approval of these items. Paper ballots will be included in the September newsletter for those members who receive newsletters through USPS. [Electronic ballots](#) must be returned by October 7, 2021; paper ballots must be returned by October 9, 2021.

We have asked Jim Potvin, Executive Director of Employee Retirement System (ERS), and Caylee Noggle, Commissioner of the Department of Community Health (DCH), to record short messages with updates and an outlook for these agencies for next year. Also, we have asked several of the Legislative leaders who have supported GSRA this past year to record short videos addressing our members.

As we did last year, after we have recorded the Plenary Session and obtained videos from our invited guests, GSRA will produce and post a video on our website on November 9, 2021. It will be made available to our members via email and Facebook as well.

The Board regrets that we will be unable to meet in person again this year, but the health and safety of our members is our ultimate concern. The virtual meeting will meet the requirements of the GSRA by-laws, as well as Georgia law for not-for-profit organizations. But we'll miss the fun parts of the meeting. In the meantime, stay safe and follow the advice of your medical advisors; hopefully we'll be able to meet in person in 2022.

How a Bill Becomes State Law in Georgia

In the May Newsletter, GSRA reported that Governor Brian Kemp signed into law House Bill 173, which is now Act 271 of the 2021-2022 legislative term. Again, HB 173 was a historic first for our association, as it is our first legislation to become law! Act 271 provides for GSRA to have input into the selection of two of the seven board members of the ERS Board of Trustees, a long-time goal of GSRA. Advocating for new laws or changes to existing laws takes considerable time and effort, as there are many hurdles to clear and overcome before a bill becomes law. GSRA thought our members might find it interesting to understand more about this process.

Ideas for bills originate from many constituencies but only legislators can introduce bills. A critical first step is to

locate a legislator to sponsor proposed new legislation. The legislator takes the idea and goes to the Office of Legislative Counsel where an attorney advises the legislator on legal issues and drafts the bill. Only bills drafted by the Legislative Counsel can be introduced "on the floor." The legislator files the bill with the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate. The bill is formally introduced in chamber when the title is read during first readings. Afterwards, the presiding officer assigns it to a standing committee.

Each committee holds meetings that are announced and open to the public. A meeting agenda will list all bills to be discussed during a meeting. If a bill is controversial, public hearings may be held. In a committee meeting, the

legislative sponsor and others explain the bill. Committee options include: Recommend Bill or Resolution Do Pass; Recommend Do NOT Pass; Recommend Do Pass with changes (amendments or substitutes); or Table (Hold) Bill. Each legislative term lasts two years. Bills introduced in the first session, if not acted on, stay alive for consideration in the second session. Also, if a bill has a budgetary impact, an estimate of the costs is called a fiscal note. The law requires many types of bills to automatically have a fiscal note before being considered in committee.

Retirement bills are unique in that every retirement bill must be referred to the Department of Audits to determine if there is any fiscal impact. Only when it is determined that there is no fiscal impact can a retirement bill be considered in the year introduced. Also, bills must be introduced before Day 20 of the session to be considered. Therefore, a retirement bill with a fiscal impact must be introduced in the first session of a two-year term. Then the bill is tabled by the committee it was assigned until the end of the first session. Typically, in May or June, the committee meets and decides if the bill will advance and be referred to the Department of Audits for actuarial review. An actuary performs the actuarial investigation and submits the findings to the Department of Audits. The Department of Audits reviews the actuarial investigation and must submit the investigation and the State Auditor Summary to the referring committee by November 1st. The bill is considered by the committee in the second session of the two-year term.

Bills favorably reported from committee are read again and placed on the General Calendar. The Rules Committee chooses bills for consideration from the General Calendar and prepares a Rules Calendar for each day's floor action. When the presiding officer calls the bill up from the Rules Calendar, the title is read again, and it is ready for floor debate, amendments, and voting. If the bill passes by

majority of membership of the chamber where it was introduced, and if the 30th day of the session (Cross-Over Day) has not been reached, it is sent to the other chamber of the General Assembly. If the second chamber passes the bill, it is returned to the chamber where it was introduced. If the first chamber rejects changes and the second chamber insists on the changes, a conference committee may be appointed wherein horse trading takes place. Committee reports are accepted by both chambers.

Each chamber of the General Assembly usually has its own legislative priorities. As a session progresses, both chambers will hold hostage bills passed by the other chamber in a game of legislative "chicken." A favorite technique is for one chamber to find a bill that the other chamber wants passed and to "light it up like a Christmas tree" by attaching amendments that it wants passed but the other chamber opposes. Bills used for these purposes are referred to as "Christmas trees" or "vehicles." This trading can become particularly vicious toward the end of the session when legislative activity must be closely scrutinized since bills can be amended with new unrelated language and the original language and intent can be entirely deleted.

Once a bill passes both chambers, the Governor may sign the bill or do nothing, and the bill becomes law. If the Governor vetoes the bill, a two-thirds majority of each chamber is required to override the veto. The bill becomes an Act and is effective the following July 1st unless a different effective date is provided.

The upcoming 2022 Regular Session will be the second year of the 2021-2022 legislative term. During the 40-day session, in addition to advocating for our bills, GSRA monitors all legislative activity for potential impact to state employees and retirees. Bills can be tracked through the General Assembly and the legislative process by visiting the Georgia General Assembly website at: <https://www.legis.ga.gov>.



Jim's View: Laying the Groundwork for 2022

As we approach the last quarter of calendar year 2021 and looking forward to the 2022 session of the Georgia General Assembly, I wanted to bring you up to speed on our efforts to lay the groundwork needed to ensure that GSRA is successful in meeting its legislative goals for the 2022 General Assembly session.

By the time you read this article, representatives of GSRA will have met with Governor Kemp's new policy advisor (the previous policy advisor accepted a position with UGA). For those keeping count, GSRA representatives have met with the Governor or his policy advisor three times since the end of the 2021 General Assembly session.

In addition, Chuck Clay and I will have attended an event where we were hoping to have some one on one time with the Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives, along with the Chair of the House Retirement Committee.

These meetings have taken place in an atmosphere of very positive Georgia economic news. By now, you know that the ERS Fund ended the last fiscal year with a 29% return on investment or an increase of approximately 3.2 billion dollars. In addition, the State of Georgia ended the last fiscal year with a budget surplus of 2 billion dollars (this was after approximately 1.6 billion dollars was transferred from the budget surplus to the state's rainy day fund). In addition, the current fiscal year has started off very well financially.

While we continue to press our case for the restoration of the annual colas with the Governor's Office and key legislators, we are also anxiously waiting for the actuarial study of Senate Bill 167 to be completed and submitted to the Senate Retirement Committee Chair Randy Robertson. The actuarial study has to be submitted to Chairman

Robertson and other key government officials by no later than November 1st. As you recall, Senate Bill 167 seeks to mandate, except under certain economic conditions, annual 3% colas for all retired state employees, including those who retire under the GSEPS Plan. We are looking forward to having a part to play in ensuring that Senate Bill 167 in some form is successfully passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. It will not be an easy task to accomplish, but I assure you that we will work as hard as possible to make it happen.

The 2022 General Assembly session will be a very important, maybe the most important, legislative session for GSRA. I know that when the time comes that we need you to raise your collective voices that you will do so in great numbers. With your support, we can make the 2022 General Assembly session a successful one for retired state employees.

Jim

July/August New Members

Name	County		Name	County		Name	County
July			Patricia Moore	Colquitt		Ricky Nelson	Banks
Judy Angelo	Gwinnett		Kathy Parks	Bibb		Deborah Hammond	Coweta
Stephanie Arrington	Bibb		Mattie Pitts	Clinch		Cynthia Pollard	Gwinnett
Renee Bell	Emanuel		George Price	Upson		Gary Hoy	Coweta
Nola Bricker	Hall		Robert Reid	Clayton		Brenda Bettross	McDuffie
Vernetta Brooks	Cobb		Rachel Ross	Lee		Gloria Lewis	Appling
Margaret Cawood	Catoosa		Philip Sampson	Towns		Gale Speich	Glynn
Monica Cherry	Henry		Judy Shurling	Washington		Cynthia Kelley-Maddox	DeKalb
Denise Coley	DeKalb		Vickie Simmons	Colquitt		Patti Fort	Glynn
Laura Cook	Gwinnett		Lucy Smith	Gwinnett		Bonnie Parrish	Emanuel
Gail Crew	Paulding		Jacqueline Walker	Jones		Mike Kinsey	Whitfield
Jimmy Deloach	Bulloch		Renee Wright	Dawson		Thomas Leizear	Jackson
Michele Garner	Douglas		August			Melissa Leizear	Jackson
Patricia Harris	Coweta		Lillie Tukes	Dooly		Annette Eubanks	DeKalb
Bobby Hughes	Whitfield		Laurie Bennett	Upson		Sylvia Wilson	Carroll
Teresa Jolly	Crisp		Mattie Wright	Dougherty		Ken Thompson	Cobb
Jerry Jones	Emanuel		Charles English	Fayette		Margaret Sellers	Appling
Susan Mims	Colquitt		Mary Stover	Gilmer		Ken Thompson	Cobb
Margaret Sellers	Appling		Julie Prestenbach	Ware		Ricky Fort	Glascok

Stephanie Hallisy	Richmond		Ashok Datta	Fulton		Randy Wishard	Dade
Valerie Carter	Fulton		Charles Graddick	Muscogee		Pamela Wishard	Dade
Lucy Courchaine	Brooks		Robert Holdcraft	Gwinnett		Deborah Long	Clayton
Kathy Kovach	Brooks		Donald Lamberth	Macon		Josephine Simpson	Sumter
Beverly Jones	Whitfield		James Robertson	Hall		Jerry Lewis	Sumter
Vernita Adams	Richmond		Jan Martin	Johnson		Tommy Beacham	Jackson
Genetha Rice-Singleton	Rockdale						

REMEMBER – SHBP RETIREE OPTION CHANGE PERIOD

Please review the material that you should have received regarding the SHBP Retiree Option Change Period- - October 18 – November 5, 2021. **ALTHOUGH YOUR SHBP COVERAGE WILL NOT CHANGE IN CY 2022 IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE A CHANGE**, you are encouraged to review the information on page 12 about how your coverage could be affected in the circumstances listed. If you decide to make a change in your SHBP coverage, sometime during the Retiree Option Change Period, you can change your health insurance option. For procedures to make a change, go to page 13 of your “Decision Guide.”



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 solutions 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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