

## **Tips for Starting a Local GSRA Chapter**

In order to better advance the concerns of state retirees and to provide opportunities for participation, members are encouraged to start local chapters of GSRA under the umbrella of the statewide association. Local chapters, through the individual members and their collective membership, are well positioned to advocate retirees' positions and hold local area legislators accountable. Local chapters also provide opportunities for members to gather socially, to be educated, and to rally for action.

### **How to Start a Local Chapter:**

Contact area retirees to determine who would be willing to lead in the organization and promotion of a chapter:

#### **Consider:**

- Local Chapter Bylaws (attached)
- Geographic area to be served and name of chapter
- Potential number of available retirees
- Current GSRA members (Request GSRA list of members within the proposed area from Luther Lewis, sorted by zip codes)

#### **Organizational Meeting:**

- From those identified as willing and capable to lead in the organization of a chapter, elect a Steering Committee composed of the following positions:
  - President
  - Vice-President
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Membership
- Adopt the standard Local Chapter Bylaws
- Submit Bylaws and list of officers, with full contact information, to GSRA for approval
- GSRA will provide up to \$250 as start up money for direct expenses upon request
- Prepare a budget and submit to GSRA for approval

#### **Meeting to Select Local Chapter Officers and Board**

- Following GSRA approvals, the Steering Committee will call a meeting of chapter members:
  - The members will elect Officers
  - The Officers will appoint Board Members

### **Getting the Word Out:**

- Build the retirees list:
  - Ask everyone to provide a list of all known retirees in the area
  - Gather first and last name, address, zip code, phone no., email address, agency, and member status
  - Ask local agency offices to provide any available retiree lists
  - Follow up with news articles and pictures of the new chapter officers in all of the local newspapers with membership information for interested retirees
  - Use the state GSRA member list which can be sorted by your local zip codes
  - Pass out flyers and applications at regional SHBP meetings, retirement dinners, “coffee clubs,” etc.,.

### **Local Chapter Meeting:**

- After the Officers and Board are in place, schedule an educational meeting for all retirees (not just members) and your state officials from the area
  - Request a GSRA officer as speaker
  - Sign-in all attendees to capture names, addresses, phone nos., email, and membership status
  - Promote membership by offering to accept applications and fees “on the spot.”
  - Provide handout copies of GSRA Newsletters and Action Alerts
  - Consider having refreshments and even door prizes
  - Follow up with news articles and pictures of the meeting in all of the local newspapers with membership information for interested retirees

### **Tips and Lessons Learned:**

- There are probably more interested retirees in your area than you might expect
- The most critical step is identifying the retirees in the area. Neither State Agencies nor the ERS will provide this information, so you have to be creative in building your potential member lists.
- Remember that spouses and widows/widowers as well as current employees have a stake in the retirement fund so keep them on your list, also.
- Membership is not limited to those strictly within the chapter’s defined area.
- Encourage letters to State Officials and the ERS by providing officials’ names, addresses, and suggested emphasis points.
- It is hard for some retirees to travel, so if you are planning a full membership meeting, make sure that the hours are convenient and the agenda is worthwhile.