

Governor's Budget Includes Adjustment For Retirees

Teresa MacCartney, Executive Officer, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget has confirmed to GSRA that Governor Deal's budget for FY 2018 includes a one-time adjustment for Retirees of the Employees Retirement System. The ONE-TIME adjustment is for 3% of the annual benefit up to a maximum benefit of \$30,000 or a maximum of \$900.

Of course, the Governor's recommendation must be approved by both Houses of the General Assembly and finally signed by Governor Deal. Our Legislative Reception on February 1st is a good time to ask our Legislators to approve the Governor's recommendation and to thank them for their support.

The retiree benefit increase goes along with the recommended 2% pay increase for active employees and teachers and a substantial increase for the state's law enforcement and casework employees. Governor Deal's Pay Package budget recognizes that the increases are required in order to attract new employees with critical job skills or retain successful performers in jobs critical to the state's missions.

GSRA DAY AT THE CAPITOL FEBRUARY 1, 2017

GSRA Day at the Capitol and the *GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception* are coming up soon! Please join your fellow members in Atlanta on February 1 and let's demonstrate to our elected officials that we care deeply about pension, health insurance and other issues facing state retirees. We have multiple opportunities that day to meet with our state legislators and others and make our voices heard. Join us in Atlanta February 1!

[Event Details](#)

[Reception Registration](#)

GSRA Leaders/New DCH Commissioner Meet

On December 29, 2016 a GSRA delegation consisting of President Kip Mann, President Elect Steve Herndon, Legislative Liaison Chuck Freedman and BJ Bennett met with newly appointed Department of Community Health (DCH) Commissioner Frank Berry, DCH Deputy Commissioner Andrew Johnson and State Health Benefit Plan Division Director Jeff Rickman at DCH headquarters. The purpose of the meeting was to meet the new DCH Commissioner and introduce him to GSRA.

GSRA reached out to Commissioner Berry right away after his appointment by Governor Deal and Commissioner Berry indicated his willingness to meet as soon as possible after taking office, December 1. President Kip Mann stated, "We are very fortunate and pleased that Commissioner

Berry indicated his willingness to meet with us to get acquainted and briefly hear from us on issues of importance to our membership." Commissioner Berry, himself a career state employee, indicated the high regard in which he holds state employees, as well as retirees, for their many years of service. Although President Mann and President Elect Steve Herndon had previously worked with Commissioner Berry, the Commissioner demonstrated his interest in all GSRA representatives and their state service.

President Mann provided Commissioner Berry with information on GSRA issues for 2017 and reviewed some recent history related to health insurance. The opportunity was taken to communicate to the new commissioner that GSRA does not favor the defined contribution approach, as

has been done for Board of Regents retirees. Commissioner Berry indicated he does not anticipate major state health benefit plan changes during the remainder of Governor Deal's term of office.

At the end of the meeting, Commissioner Berry thanked the GSRA representatives and indicated his appreciation for initiating a conversation on behalf of state employees and

retirees, and indicated his hope to continue such meetings in the future. Each of the GSRA representatives expressed their sincere appreciation for the opportunity to meet Commissioner Berry and his staff, especially as he takes on his new duties as DCH Commissioner.

ERS Executive Secretary Report

The Employees Retirement System's Executive Director Jim Potvin reported the following to the ERS Board of Trustees on December 15, 2016.

Number of Retirees (11/30/16)	48,763
Number of Actives (11/30/16)	60, 229
Number of Actives in GSEPS ¹ (11/30/16)	29,268
Average Annual Benefit (6/30/15)	\$27,893

TRS Statistics

The Teachers Retirement System's Annual Report for June 2016 shows the following statistics.

Number of Retirees (6/30/16)	113,066
Number of Active Teachers (6/30/16)	218,215
Average Annual Benefit (6/30/16)	\$35,868

Asset allocation at June 30 – ERS and TRS

Asset Allocation at June 30 (Percentages)	ERS	TRS
Equities:		
Domestic	47.8%	52.7%
International	14.5	15.9
Private Equity	0.6	--
Domestic Obligations	--	
US Treasuries	13.8	15.2
US Agencies	--	--
Corporate and other bonds	14.1	14.5
International Obligations	--	--
Governments	0.5	0.5
Corporates	1.1	1,2
Mutual Funds	--	--
Commingled Funds	7.6	--

¹ GSEPS: Georgia State Employee Pension and Savings



Kip's View: Good Start, but We Need to Achieve a Long Term Solution

The Governor has recommended in the FY2018 State Budget that ERS retirees receive a one-time 3% adjustment on up to \$30,000.00 of annual benefits or a maximum of \$900.00. This helps but does not address our request that funds be appropriated for a 1% COLA to ERS retirees. While the Governor's request does not fully grant what we requested, it represents the first time since 2008 that funds have been recommended by the Governor for this purpose, and we greatly appreciate his support.

The governor is also recommending a 2% salary increase for the majority of state employees and all teachers, down somewhat from our goal of 3%, but still an improvement for the future.

The long range solution for the improved solvency of the ERS retirement fund, and the fund's ability to be in a position that a full COLA could be awarded still need to be addressed. At present the fund is currently funded at about 74% of funded liability and on schedule to be fully funded in 25 years. Current guidelines state that a COLA should not be granted until the fund reaches 80% of funded liability. But this will be several years in the future at the current rate of improvement without additional support. This year's goals asked that a significant contribution be made to the fund by the State to raise the funded liability to 79%, and that the ERS Board raise the ADEC

(Actuarially Defined Employer Contribution) by a fraction of a percent above what currently is calculated to incrementally increase the funded liability percentage each year. If these two goals are addressed, the ERS Board can address the issue of maintaining ERS retiree benefits at the level they achieved upon retirement without loss of purchasing power, as provided in the ERS authorizing legislation. Otherwise, the issue will have to be addressed (if at all) each legislative session as in the last two sessions.

Copies of GSRA Goals and Objectives were published in last month's (December) newsletter. GSRA members were asked to talk with their legislators about our goals before they go to Atlanta, and these goals will be given to legislators at *GSRA Day at the Capitol* on February 1, 2017. Continue to stress to your legislators what's important to you, and we'll work hard to make these goals a reality.

I look forward to seeing you at the Capitol on February 1, 2017. Our first activity is a picture with the Governor at 9:30 am, where we can thank him for our adjustment last year, and the 3% adjustment he is proposing again this year.

See you there!

Kip

Support GSRA Annual Partners

GSRA has three annual partners: Atlanta Postal Credit Union (APCU); United Health Care (UHC); Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BCBS) and a long term relationship with Associate Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA). All of these organizations have been very good for GSRA, helping us defray costs associated with our Annual Meeting and the Legislative Reception each year. They also provide services of interest to our members. We encourage you to review services that they offer and choose those that appear of value to you. These organizations may send you information or contact you in the future regarding their services. Thank you!

Your Board at Work

In addition to their regular monthly meeting and committee assignment duties, your GSRA Board members occasionally have extracurricular activities that have to be attended to in support of the GSRA mission. Board members stayed after the regular January board meeting in Covington recently to stuff information and promotional items into the bags to be distributed at *GSRA Day at the Capitol* next month. The bags will be delivered by GSRA local chapters/members to every legislator on Capitol Hill.



Some of the board members who stayed to stuff - from left, Bob Pollock Lynell Hayes, Janis Tidwell, Janet Blackmon, Sam Shepherd, Kevin Burke, Steve Herndon and Allan Hill



Board Members hard at work stuffing the information bags

Distribution of the information bags is a great *GSRA Day at the Capitol* tradition that GSRA has followed since the first event. This gives GSRA members a chance to visit with their legislators and/or their legislative staffs during the day, while following up with a more social visit at the *GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception* later that evening. At the same time, it allows GSRA to provide each legislator with important information about our association, its members, and its goals.

September – December New Members

Name	County	Name	County	Name	County
September		Patrick Finney	Richmond	Carol Kennedy	Washington
Tamara Barber	Muscogee	Sidney Floyd	Elbert	James Kennedy	Washington
Matthew Byers	Habersham	Janie Fuller	Oconee	LaDetria King	Richmond
Sherri Chadwick	Cobb	Wilma Hamilton	Chatham	Jay Klapper	Gwinnett
Luzmaria Chaney	Newton	Sekema Harmon	Bibb	John Lindsey	Washington
Fern Clark	Clayton	Jarrett Harrison	Grady	Lisa Lockett	Clayton
William Cliff	Upson	Aubrey Hasty, Jr	Turner	Stephanie Love	Carroll
Jan Crane	Banks	Al Hicks	Glynn	Eleanor Mann	Clarke

Larry Dean	Laurens	Jana Holloway	Union	Joseph Mann	Hart
Ronnie Norris	Gwinnett	Melanie Pierson	Hall	Mary Hopkins-Lewis	Thomas
Cynthia Pearson	Lowndes	Brenda Riggins	Jones	Maria Mims	Gwinnett
Mattie Pitts	Clinch	Dana Russell	Walton	Patricia Morton	Bulloch
Victor Roberts	Cobb	Jeffrey Sanders	Upton	Jennifer Newby	Clayton
Roshell Robinson	Newton	Ann Marie Shippee	Cobb	Carolyn Seabolt	Lumpkin
Linda Rollins	Crisp	Thomas Stokes	Houston	Barbara Simonson	Cherokee
David Shirley	DeKalb	Lewis Taylor	Gwinnett	Eddie Stephens	Twiggs
Julie Slater	DeKalb	Charlie Thompson	DeKalb	December	
Rosa Thurmond	Clarke	Carolyn Tidd	Harris	Arnold Depetro, Jr	Cobb
Felecia Jones	DeKalb	Linda Wilkes	Emmanuel	Steven Dunlap	Fulton
Robert Lamotte	Clarke	Voleta Yarbrough	Colquitt	Ann Jacks	Polk
Penelope Morris	Schley	Lee Flynn	Coweta	Paul Medders	Glynn
Gypsy Poulk	Douglas	Johnnie Rabren	Newton	Annie Mitchell	Thomas
Catherine Youngblood	DeKalb	Jaclyn Rabren	Newton	William News	Whitfield
October		November		Bobby Phillips	Meriwether
Fred Aiken	Cobb	Gloria Albritten	Twiggs	Lee Rabon	Decatur
Lori Binford	DeKalb	John Ballard	DeKalb	Laura Smith	Clarke
Robert Brown, Jr	Henry	Darlene Bearden	Chattooga	Milton Williams	Thomas
Carol Dunn	Muscogee	Pansey Bond	Bibb	Spud Woodward	Glynn
Geraline Heard	Fulton	James Daugherty	Dekalb		
Julie Hilliard	Rockdale	Margaret Exom	Muscogee		
Beverly Jackson	Rockdale	Terri Giles	Clayton		
Gerri Marmon	Gwinnett	Carolyn Holmes	Muscogee		

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE ERS ANNUAL MEETING IN APRIL

THE ERS BOARD WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 20, 2017, 10:00 AM AT THE ERS OFFICES IN ATLANTA, TWO NORTHSIDE 75, SUITE 300, ATLANTA, GA 30318. MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THIS MEETING.

Links of Potential Interest to Support Seniors in Need

[Aging at Home: Common Problems and Solutions](#)

[How Seniors are Designing Social Support Networks](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Home Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities](#)

[The Benefits of Emotional Support Animals](#)

[Depression in the Elderly: 7 Ways to Help](#)

[Guide to Addiction Prevention for Seniors](#)

[Recognizing and Treating Depression: A Guide for the Elderly & Their Caregivers](#)

[Rehab and Medicare: The Ultimate Guide to Addiction Treatment for Seniors](#)

Enroll in Pension Deduction

If you receive a retirement benefit from the Employees Retirement System, keep your GSRA membership current the convenient way. Consider having your GSRA dues deducted from your benefit. It's easy! Go to www.mygsra.com (Select Join US, Benefits, and Pension Deduction form.) Complete the Authorization, complete your "pension ID number" and mail as instructed on the form.

How Can We Help?

If you have questions or need help with anything to do with GSRA, please contact help@mygsra.com or call 770-312-2799. Let us help you!



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Endorsed Benefits

The Georgia State Retirees Association (GSRA) makes many member only benefits available to its members. GSRA endorses the following member benefits:

- Long Term Care / Home Health Care Policy
- Life Insurance
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Travel Discounts
- Car Rental Discounts
- Tax-Deferred Annuity
- Cancer Treatment Policy
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Identity Theft Protection
- Hotel Discounts
- Computer Discounts

Review your benefits at: www.myAMBAbenefits.info/gsra

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*2015 UnitedHealthcare Customer Experience Survey scores for Group Medicare Advantage plan members. Plans are insured through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or one of its affiliated companies, a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in the plan depends on the plan's contract renewal with Medicare.

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