

Retirees' Chapter News

Virginia Governmental Employees Association



A Message from the President...

The General Assembly is scheduled to conclude on March 12. Now is our chance to press for the proposed 2 percent pay increase for state employees to be in both years of the budget and be across-the-board at a minimum. The final decision will be made by the Joint Conference Committee. You can go to virginia-generalassembly.gov to track the budget language and identify the Committee Members. Our website - vgea.org - and *eNews* have lots of information as well.

On Presidents' Day, February 15, VGEA's Legislative Day, Mother Nature snowed on our parade. Thus, we urged the Governor, Senators, and Delegates in writing to support the VGEA priority of a minimum, across-the-board 2 percent or more raise for state employees each year in the proposed budget because:

- Retention of qualified staff who effectively carry out executive and legislative directives is essential and recruitment and training are costly
- The Consumer Price Index = 2.1 percent. Stagflation is a defacto pay cut.
- Healthcare Costs Increase = 6.8 percent
- State pay lags private sector pay by more than 21 percent
- Localities use state funds to provide local employees with pay increases.

Both House Appropriations (3 percent) and Senate Finance (2 percent) included pay

raises in the first year of their new budgets. A step forward, but we must stay the course.

At our February 8 meeting, Dee Esser introduced Henrico Police Officer Steve Nurmi who provided suggestions and responded to questions about personal and home safety. Faye Spruill provided our December and January Treasurer's reports. See Janet Martino's Minutes on page 2 for more details.

We will convene again at Nick's Roman Terrace, 8051 W. Broad Street, Richmond, for our March and April meetings at 11:30 a.m.:

- March 14 - Speaker: Shepherd's Center
- April 11 - Speaker: Delegate Betsy Carr

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that has." - *Margaret Meade*

Thanks and see you at the meeting!

Walt
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VGEA Richmond Retirees Chapter

February 2016 Meeting Minutes

The 2016 February Meeting of the Retiree Chapter was held on February 8 at Nick's Roman Terrace. The meeting was conducted by Walt Pulliam, President. He asked that everyone check the listing that was being circulated to ensure that all information was correct, and to notify Janet Martino of any changes to your email or address. Walt welcomed everyone, and apologized for the fact that no Retiree Newsletter was sent out last month. Marian Wimer made a motion that the minutes be accepted as distributed. Winfree Mountcastle seconded. Motion carried.

Dee Esser, Vice President, said that the Board is still working on revising the bylaws. Our Annual Meeting on September 17 will be at the Westin Hotel on Broad Street. The board discussed whether to support the Governor's proposal to limit the publishing of State Employee names and salaries. They are trying to keep the heat on everyone to have an unconditional yearly COLA. Since next Monday is Legislative Day, we need to stress this with everyone you see.

Winfree Mountcastle stated that his calculations for this year's COLA would be .012 percent.

Vice President Dee Esser introduced our speaker: Henrico Safety Officer Steve Nurmi. He has been with Henrico Police since 1996, and in his current position as Safety Officer for 12 years.

Officer Nurmi stated that in order for a crime to occur, it takes three things: opportunity, desire and skill. We can't control desire or skill, but we can take control and limit opportunity. You can limit opportunity by being aware of your surroundings and being assertive.

He gave us the following tips:

1. If you are in an elevator, make conversation with anyone else so everyone knows that you are aware of who is in the elevator
2. Be very alert in parking lots and always park near lights
3. Always trust your instincts
4. To protect yourself, use whatever you have in your hands – your keys, purse, cell phone, a bag, etc.

5. Always keep the shrubbery around your house trimmed so windows are not covered
6. If you are leaving a building and you're scared, ask someone to walk with you
7. If you are suspicious about something, call the police (not 911). They will do field interviews and take pictures. An example would be a suspicious car in the neighborhood. Under reporting is one of the police's problem
8. Work Safety – especially if you are responsible for opening or closing. If you see anything unusual, call police before you enter or leave the building
9. Home Safety – Don't advertise that you are going on vacation especially on Facebook. Make sure you do let your trusted neighbors know. Lock all windows and doors. Make sure you have lights on your garage, doors and walkways. Use prickly bushes under windows. Keep your home well maintained. Don't leave ladders outside. If you can afford it, alarm systems are nice. Be active in your Neighborhood Watch Program. Be aware of crimes in your neighborhood. You can check crime statistics at henricopolice.org or your town's website
10. In your vehicle, lock your doors when driving, when pumping gas, and when you get out. Never get out and leave your car running. Don't leave valuables in your car
11. Always have a cell phone with you
12. If you are ever in a dangerous situation, quickly decide what you are going to do, and then act on it. Get somewhere safe and call 911. If you go for a walk or run, let someone know your route and always go against the flow of traffic
13. Always listen to the voice in the back of your head and avoid isolated areas.

Faye Spruill gave the Treasurer's Report. She reported that our current balance is \$1,892.87.

Walt reminded everyone that VGEA Legislative Day is February 15. Call the VGEA Office and register if you want to attend.

Our next Retirees' Chapter meeting will be Monday, March 14, at 11:30 a.m. at Nick's Roman Terrace.

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Our March meeting speaker will be an individual from Shepherd's Center.

Submitted by:
Janet Martino
Secretary

This VGEA bumper sticker from the 1970s really says it all!



House Proposed 3 Percent; Senate 2 Percent Pay Raises in Budget Plans

On February 21, the House of Delegates Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee released their proposed amendments to Governor McAuliffe's biennial budget. **In December, the Governor included funding for a 2 percent pay raise in his budget's second year** (if the state's revenue projections are met), but we had to rely on the General Assembly to provide budget amendments that would give State workers a pay raise before then.

And they came through!

The **House Appropriations Committee has allocated a 3 percent** across-the-board raise for the December 2016 paychecks, plus **1 percent for the second year**. Money for the raise comes, in part, from about \$88



million in total savings from early payoff of a deferred debt on State employee pensions. Those savings reflect money from the general fund and non-general fund sources, such as higher education.

The Senate Finance Committee plan also has a raise in the first year, but it is a 2 percent across the board raise.

Next step is for the budget plans to be sent to a **Joint Conference Committee**, which will decide which parts of each plan (House or Senate) they will keep. The Conferees have been selected and they are: **Senators: Emmett Hanger** (R-Mount Solon); **Tommy Norment** (R-Williamsburg); **Stephen Newman** (R-Forest); **Frank Ruff** (R-Clarksville); **Frank Wagner** (R-Virginia Beach); **Janet Howell** (D-Reston); and **Dick Saslaw** (D-Springfield).

Delegates: Chris Jones (R-Suffolk); **Kirk Cox** (R-Colonial Heights); **Steven Landes** (R-Verona); **John O'Bannon** (R-Richmond); **Tag Greason** (R-Lansdowne); and **Luke Torian** (D-Dumfries).

Especially if your representative is one of the Conferees listed above, **tell your Delegate and Senator that you support:**

- The **3 percent pay increase in the House Budget plan to help close the private/public pay gap** in positions with the greatest disparity, specifically base salary adjustments for all State employees in both years that will more than cover the cost of living (no less than 2 percent plus additional targeted salary adjustments for high turnover positions)
- **Salary improvements to minimize salary compression**
- Establish a workgroup to develop a plan and time frame to **meet the long-term goal of providing State employees with total compensation equivalent to their private sector counterparts.**

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Get in touch with your legislators today!

Now is the time to tell your representatives in Richmond what their priorities should be during this Budget biennium. Contact your District's Delegate and Senator by phone, email or postal mail. If you aren't sure who they are, or need their emails, address or phone numbers, go to <http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov> and simply enter your address. The tool will give you the names and contact information for your representatives in the House of Delegates and the State Senate.

