

Retirees' Chapter News

Virginia Governmental Employees Association



1011 East Main Street, Suite 400
Richmond, VA 23219
info@vgea.org
804-355-3120
1-877-302-7146



A Message from the President...

Our February 13 meeting featured Pamela Smith of the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) who was introduced by Dee Esser, Vice President. Ms. Smith spoke about the VA. Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) and Medicare preventive services. Our Treasurer's report was presented by Faye Spruill for Nov., Dec., and Jan.

Winfree Mountcastle advised that our 2017 VRS Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) would be 1.26 percent or \$12.60 per \$1,000. Dee also advised that she would invite Ron Jordan, VGEA Executive Director, to speak at our April 10 meeting.

We needed to rebuild our "Phone Tree," so Janet Martino and several other members took lists of members without email and will give them a call whenever needed. If you wish to help out, please contact Janet (contact information in the right column). We are also looking for folks willing to serve on the Nominating Committee. If you are willing to serve, please contact Walt (804.972.1226). Current officer terms expire in April. Incoming Officers will serve through April 2019. See the Minutes for details on page two.

The General Assembly adjourned on February 25 and will reconvene for the veto session on April 5. Our VGEA Director and staff did yeoman work in pushing for state pay raises. Their efforts were supplemented

by personal visits from Members and 110 pages of emailed comments. This was a start, but we need to keep pushing for pay raises as: (1) state pay trails comparable private sector pay by an average of 27%; (2) healthcare costs rise much more rapidly than inflation; (3) about 10% of state workers are eligible for public assistance; and (4) no pay increase plus inflation equals stagflation or a pay cut.

Our next meeting is at 11:30 a.m., Monday, March 13. Our speaker will be Lisa Schaffner, Public Relations Director for the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS). Our April 10 meeting will be our last until the Annual Membership Meeting in September.

We will meet at the Red Lobster, 8009 W. Broad Street, 23294 (804.747.9490). Anyone who might require mobility assistance can park on the right side of the building and enter through the emergency exit door. Please plan to attend and bring a friend.

Reminder: April 1 begins the new VGEA Membership year. Please renew your membership and encourage others to do so.

"Hear us roar, in numbers too big to ignore."
- Helen Reddy

Walt

Walt Pulliam, Jr.
President

Officers

Walt Pulliam, Jr. *President*

9210 Waterloo Court
Richmond, VA 23229
804-741-5466
waltpulliam@verizon.net
VDOC

Dee Esser *Vice President*

4600 Willow Leaf Place
Henrico, VA 23228
804-740-8898
d_esser@verizon.net
VEC

Faye Spruill *Treasurer*

4818 Village Lake Drive
Richmond, VA 23234
804-272-7065
fzspruill@verizon.net
SCHEV

Janet Martino *Secretary*

3010 Briar Lane
Richmond, VA 23228
804-264-1009
janetwva@msn.com
DOLI

VGEA Richmond Retirees Chapter

February 2017 Meeting Minutes

The 2017 February Meeting of the Retiree Chapter was held on the 13th at Red Lobster. The meeting was conducted by Walt Pulliam, President. Walt welcomed everyone. He welcomed Carole Noe, a first time attendee who is retired from UVA.

The Treasurer's Report was given by Faye Spruill, Treasurer. The current balance is \$1,650.77. Melissa Marrion made a motion that we accept the Treasurer's Report. It was seconded by Bill Davis. Motion carried.

Winfree Mountcastle informed us that based on his calculations, our Cost of Living (COLA) increase will be 1.26%. This increase would be effective July 1st and will be reflected in your August 1st VRS check.

Winfree made a suggestion that in order to get better attendance at our meetings that whenever a new member comes for the first meeting that we pay for their lunch when they come back for another meeting. He suggested that we contact Ron Jordan to see if we can get some financial assistance. He also suggested that in order to increase our treasury that we pay so much each month at the meeting.

Dee Esser, Vice President, introduced this month's speaker, Pamela Smith from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services. She has been with the Department for eight years in various capacities. She is currently the State Director, managing 24 local programs.

Ms. Smith explained that the local programs are the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP). They provide free Medicare counseling and help in navigating the Medicare system. This includes Part A, B, C, and D; long term care; and appeals for denied claims. All

counseling is done at the local level.

She stated that her job, in addition to overseeing these 24 local programs, is to apply for grants and manage them. She is responsible to do all required tracking and reporting. She encouraged all of us to contact our legislative representatives to encourage them to support this Department. She also asked us to consider volunteering. VICAP is always looking for volunteers.

In the Richmond area, the local Program is Senior Connections on East Cary Street. It is an excellent program. Their phone number is (804) 343-3014. If you need assistance or if you wish to volunteer.

Ms. Smith explained the difference between a Medi Gap and a Secondary policy. A Medi Gap policy only covers what Medicare covers, and it pays what Medicare does not (such as the 20% deductible). A Secondary policy covers all that the Medi Gap covers **plus** it will also cover some things that Medicare does not cover. All policies are different, and you have to choose the one that is best for you.

Under Medicare, most preventive services are now free. Some things she listed were an annual wellness visit, advanced care planning, cardio screening, glaucoma screening, HIV, diabetes, PAP test, Hepatitis C, bone mass, flu and pneumonia injections, and smoking cessation. Additionally, low income individuals can receive extra help, but you have to qualify.

Walt stated that we should contact our legislative delegates and thank them for making pay raises for State workers a priority.

Dee volunteered to check with Ron Jordan regarding any money in his budget that could assist us
(continued on page 3)

General Assembly Adjourned February 25: VGEA Advocated for 3 Percent Salary Increase, Plus More!

On Saturday, February 25, the House and Senate each approved the budget conference report with only one dissenting vote. The budget now goes to Governor Terry McAuliffe who has 30 days in which to submit amendments, veto items or sign the bill as presented.

Highlights include the 3 percent across-the-board pay raise for state classified employees (and similar positions in non-executive branch agencies). The 3 percent salary increase will be in August 1 paychecks. As state employees well remember, in two of the last three years the raises failed to occur because of shortfalls in state General Fund revenues. That is not the case for the 2017 salary increase!

Some of Virginia's lowest paid and/or highest turnover state employee positions will also receive an additional 2 percent raise, bringing their total increase to 5 percent. Those positions include:

Direct Service Associate I, Direct Service Associate II, Direct Service Associate III, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse I, Registered Nurse II/Nurse Practitioner/Physicians Assistant,

February Minutes *(continued from page 2)*

in recruiting new members. She asked if we wanted a member of the Legislature or Ron Jordan to give us the legislative update at our April meeting. The majority preferred Ron Jordan. Dee will contact him.

Our next meeting will be March 13, 2017 at 11:30 a.m. at the Red Lobster on West Broad Street.

***Submitted by:
Janet Martino
Secretary***

Housekeeping/ Apparel Worker I, Therapy Assistant, Therapist I and Therapist II. That raise will be effective September 10 and applies to those job positions across all state agencies.

For faculty at state colleges and universities, the budget provides a 2 percent increase for all institutions. Colleges are also given the authority to grant larger increases at their discretion, using other funding sources. An additional 1 percent increase is provided for those eight institutions that did not give faculty raises in 2016. Classified employees and university staff in higher education will receive a 3 percent salary increase like the rest of the state workforce.

Funding is provided to improve the salary competitiveness of deputy district court clerks. The budget also contains additional actions to improve starting salaries and market competitiveness for the Virginia State Police as well as pay improvements for the State Capitol Police.

Funding is included to support the JLARC study of total state employee compensation (due back this fall). Additionally, the new budget adds funding for agency training for succession planning as well as funds for the Department of Human Resource Management to participate in an occupationally-based data service, and administer a standardized employee exit survey. All of these items were initiatives of the Employee Retirement Security and Pension Reform Commission.

This is the best package of pay improvements for state employees in a decade or more!

The VGEA will continue to update you when Governor McAuliffe takes budget action.

Virginia Governmental Employees Association
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Save the date! Mark your calendar and RSVP!

VGEA Annual Meeting

(and Richmond Retirees September Chapter Meeting)

Saturday, September 16

8:30 a.m. through lunch

***at the Wyndham Virginia Crossings Hotel
Glen Allen, Virginia***

Members and one guest eat free!

Hear from legislators, DHRM, VRS, plus others!

RSVP to the VGEA Office now:

877-302-7146 (toll free) or info@vgea.org