



SRSRA NEWSLETTER

For SRS Retiree Association Members

Gene Dixon, Editor

Volume 27, No. 3 July 2024

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SRSRA Contact Information:

SRS Retiree Association, Inc. P. O. Box 5686, Aiken, SC 29804

Phone Message Line: 803-226-0070

e-mail: SRSRA@srsretirees.org or use the “Contact Us” button on the website.



Web Page: <http://srsretirees.org>



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SRSRA Mission

The mission of the SRS Retiree Association is to work to advocate for the maintenance of retiree pension and medical benefits in current dollars, provide assistance and support of the greater SRS retiree population, ensure that the retiree benefits and needs are visible to the broader community, and support current and future missions of the SRS.

About this Newsletter

The SRSRA Newsletter is published four times a year – January, April, July, and October. The Newsletter is sent to all dues paying SRSRA members. Previous editions of this newsletter are posted on the Retiree Association website at www.srsretirees.org under the Newsletters tab.

To switch to an electronic newsletter, send a note via www.srsretirees.org, with your current email address.

SRS Retirees on Facebook

Great sharing and information can be found on the SRS Retirees Facebook page. Search for the group name SRS Retirees and join your fellow retirees in that group or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1628555790551114>.

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars for the next annual meeting on April 29, 2025!



SRSRA Retiree Resource Center News

Contributed by Laureen Feinman, Manager

Celebrating 10 Years of Service!

11,000 Client Contacts	15,000 Phone contacts	5,400 Office Visits
\$4.6 Million Stipend Claims Filed	\$3.7 Million Rx Plan Review Savings	4,000 Rx Reviews

Please recognize our volunteers for giving their time and energy to the Retiree Resource Center at various points during this past decade. Some have given, and still do give, several hundreds of hours each year. Despite busy lives, family commitments, church obligations, health issues, and throughout the COVID years, they carved out time to help their fellow retirees. It takes strong teamwork to build and continue the Center, and our volunteers have successfully worked both in the office and remotely with Jeanne Szymanski and Laureen Feinman since 2014. Thank you.

Bruce Cadotte	Sandy Carroll
Larry Coleman	Bob Croley
Phil Croll	Bernice DeLoach
Mia Drutel	Debbie Epling
Dave Fauth	Annie Fields
Dick Frushour	Rick Geddes
Jeff Gingera	Aaron Grant
Kathy Grant	Larry Hall
Bob Hottel	Harvey Kinder
Nick Kuehn	John Lindsey
Henry Lucius	Bob Malstrom
Marie Malstrom	Jeanne Malanowski
Ron Malanowski	Ken Perrine
John Plodinec	Jack Roberts
Ranny Saylor	Don Stevenson
Marilyn Thompson	Cynthia Tisaranni
Joe Tisaranni	Tom Varallo
John Veldman	Marilyn Winn
Phil Zapp	David Zigelman



Gas Card Winner

The first gas card winner for this issue is Marie W. Paddleford. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email (abhottel@bellsouth.net) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.



In Memoriam: April – June 2024

SRSRA Board members obtain these names from local newspapers. If you would like your deceased loved one included, please send us their name via our website, email at SRSRA@srsretirees.org or leave a message at (803)508-7065.



Patt Michael Abbott, Healing Springs SC
Craig Alan Baptiste, Martinez
Annette Jordan Bean, Aiken
William Skinner "Bill" Boynton, North Augusta
Robert Henry "Bob" "Bobby" Carson Sr, Williston
Brian Keith Culligan, North Augusta
Lucille Hall Davidson, Aiken
Pamela Davis "Pam" Dunbar, North Augusta
Ronald Keith "Ron" Engle, North Augusta
Frances Cecilia Felak, North Augusta
Albert Leon "Catfish" Felder, Blackville
Fay Elizabeth Snellings Geldart, North Augusta
William Michael Gibson, North Augusta
John Adam Hamilton, Aiken
Louias Jasper "Shane" Hargrove, Columbia
Barbara Ann Saylor "Tickey" Harris, Aiken
George Ed Hill, Aiken
H. Perry Holcomb, North Augusta
John Alfred Killion Jr, Aiken
Theresa Nelsen Lindsay, Aiken

Charles D Markham, Evans
Craig Lee Martin, Aiken
Annie Mae McCreary, Springfield SC
Jean Bracey Meadows, Aiken
William Frederick "Bill" Mitchell, Aiken
Jessie Earl Morgan, Aiken
Colleen Kight Morris, Aiken
Neil Oscar Myers, Aiken
Charles Frederick Pegg, Aiken
Kathleen Seigler "Kathy" Pilz, Aiken
Lianne Bland Price, Augusta
Anita Sue Horen Poore, North Augusta
Daniel Louis "Dan" Saccone, Evans
Luise Ready Strother, Graniteville
George Michael "Mike" Thomas, Williston
Patricia Ann Tucker, Barnwell
Hoseph Franklin Walker Sr, Barnwell
Zenadia "Rocky" Weatherred, North Augusta
Harold Kenneth Young, Augusta

Gas Card Winner

The second gas card winner for this issue is Gayle S. Bumgarner. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email (abhottell@bellsouth.net) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.



Benefits Contact Information

SRNS & Batelle Retiree Benefit Contacts

SRNS Benefits Solutions Service Center <i>Pre and Post 65 Retirees</i>	Phone: 803-725-7772 (locally) or 800-368-7333 or service-center@srs.gov Retiree benefits and Insurance including Medical, Dental, Life Insurance, Retirement Services and Pension Plan, Health Reimbursement Plans, Health Savings Plans, and Savings and Investment Plan (SIP).
SRNS & BSRA Post-65 Benefits Advisor	LIG Solutions 855-662-0681 To enroll in Medicare supplemental Insurance and for HRA stipend
SRNS & BSRA Stipend Claims Administrator	HealthEquity (formerly WageWorks) 855-662-0681 www.healthequity.com/wageworks
Transamerica for SIP 401(k)	866-288.-257, website: www.transamerica.com/portal/srsretire/ Representatives
BC/BS of South Carolina Pre-65 Retirees	800-325-6596 (Prime, Standard, Basic, Dental and Flexible Spending Accounts: Option 5 for COBRA and 3161 Benefits)
Pharmacy Benefits Pre-65 Retirees	OptumRX: 855-811-2218 Specialty Pharmacy: BriovaRx 877.259.9428
EyeMed Vision Care	866-800-5457 (Vision Plan), website: www.eyemed.com
BAC	800-581-4222, Westinghouse Corporate Pension
Citistreet	800-581-3366, Westinghouse Corporate Savings Plan (401k)
Prudential Life Insurance	844-494-4778, website: www.prudential.com/mybenefits

DuPont Contacts

Corteva Connections	866-322-2864 with VIA Benefits https://my.viabenefits.com/
Corteva Agriscience	800-775-5955 for Life insurance and other DuPont Benefits

Government Contacts

Social Security Admin & Medicare	800-772-1213 http://www.ssa.gov 151 Corporate Parkway, Aiken SC 29803 866-275-8271
Medicare Helpline	800-633-4227 http://www.medicare.gov

SRMC Retiree Benefits Contacts

SRMC Benefits Portal	To update Pre-65 medical or dental benefits due to a qualifying life event, view amount of Retiree life insurance, update Retiree life insurance beneficiaries, make changes to Retiree Contributory Life Insurance, make changes for open enrollment, or report a divorce or death of a dependent: 833-413-1179;
SRMC Pension Payments SIP/401k	Question on direct deposit, pension questions: 803-725-7772; Service-Center@srs.gov To initiate payments, update beneficiaries, investments, process rollover out of the plan: 866-288-3257
Life Insurance Claims ViaBenefits	To report a death claim: 803-845-9222; SRMC-Benefits@srs.gov To enroll in Medicare supplemental coverage and for HRA Stipend: 800-848-1831
SRMC Benefits Department, Aiken	For any issue not identified above, or to discuss concerns with benefits.: 803-845-9222, SRMC-Benefits@srs.gov

2024 SRS Retiree Association (SRSRA) Annual Meeting Minutes April 16, 2024, USCA Etherredge Center; Aiken, SC

Call to Order and Opening Remarks – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm. The following contributors were recognized for their support: our SRSRA members, SRS Employee Association, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Savannah River Mission Completion, Battelle Savannah River Alliance, Lower Savannah Council of Governments, and Lessie Senior & Youth Center. Rhonda Whitley was also recognized for coordinating and planning this meeting.

The SRSRA mission is to advocate for retiree pension and medical benefits, provide support of SRS retirees, ensure retiree needs are visible, and support SRS missions. For over 25 years, the SRSRA Board of Directors (BOD) has given voice to retiree concerns and issues with those who can affect change. Our focus continues to be retiree pensions and benefits. We are an Association whose mission and efforts are directed towards speaking on behalf of SRS retirees. To serve the SRSRA mission, to be a voice for the retirees and to have a positive impact on SRS retirees, we must show strength. Just as we made and continue to make an impact for the nation's strength, we must be strong, viable, and visible to make an impact for SRS retirees. We must have a growing membership and a continual supply of willing volunteers. The BOD asks each member to volunteer and have an impact on our work. We need new members on the BOD and in the Association.

Please know that the SRSRA BOD is grateful for your membership in the SRSRA because each one of you makes an impact for all SRS retirees. We'll keep working on protecting benefits, increasing the stipend, and asking for a COLA. We'll keep working for you.

SRS Update – Edwin Deshong, Deputy Manager, DOE-SROO

Mr. Deshong provided an update on the SRS mission priorities, landlord transition, and retiree support. Key SRS CY24 priorities include 1) achieving significant construction milestones including completion of Saltstone Disposal Unit 9 and progress on the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC) Facility on USCA; 2) executing key cleanup projects including completion of six spent nuclear fuel dissolutions as part of the Accelerated Basin De-Inventory mission and transferring SRS landlordship from EM to NNSA; and 3) progressing the Administration's Clean Energy goals/Electric Vehicle transition.

The overall SRS funding profile is 47% EM, 51% NNSA, and 2% Work for Others. The NNSA's mission is increasing, while EM's is flat near term. The major organizations onsite are SRNS, BSRA, SRMC, Centerra, UGA and the USFS-SR. As EM completes its cleanup work at SRS towards a defined end-state, NNSA's nuclear security mission continues to increase onsite. EM is thus transferring landlord responsibilities to NNSA with transition completion at the start of FY25 (10/1/2024).

Recent key progress highlights include 1) double-stacked over 2000 canisters at Glass Waste Storage Building; 2) record production treatment of ~2.6Mgal of waste at Salt Waste Processing Facility; 3) Saltstone Disposal Unit 8 construction completion; 4) preparations for H-Canyon High Assay Low-Enriched Uranium production; 5) CD-0/1 approval for 235-F demolition; 6) major progress on AMC construction; and 7) 100% market value funding of the SRNS Multiple Employer Pension Plan.

DOE values the work and contributions of SRS retirees and is committed to continued engagement and open dialogue with the SRSRA and working together to find solutions to issues through active participation in the SRSRA Annual Meetings and quarterly meetings with the SRSRA Executive Committee, accessibility to the SRNS and SRMC Benefits Teams for information and assistance, continuous improvement on claims filing and reimbursements, ensuring pension obligations are met, and advocating for the SRSRA Resource Center.

SRSRA Resource Center (RC) Update – Don Stevenson, SRSRA

The SRSRA RC provides free employee benefit assistance to SRS retirees by working with retirees and their families, SRS prime and benefits contractors, and Medicare providers. Services include assistance in choosing and enrolling in Medicare insurance plans and in filing reimbursement claims. The RC also offers monthly Age-In Training sessions for upcoming retirees and in-person appointments with our certified Medicare counselors. The RC has moved to 210 Newberry Street NW, Aiken, SC. The telephone message line is 803-226-0070 or contact us through our website www.srsretirees.org or srsra@srsretirees.org.

The SRSRA worked with the SRS Benefits Team to establish tiered annual stipend allocations as well as two stipend increases. The total increase since stipend inception has been 4.5% for Tier 1, 8.5% for Tier 2, 25.0% for Tier 3, and 43.5% for Tier 4. Since RC inception through 3/2024, 1827 participants have attended Age-In Training sessions, over \$4.4M in Health Retirement Account claims have been processed, and 4080 prescription drug plan reviews have been conducted resulting in over \$3.5M in savings for retirees.

Gas Card Winner

The third gas card winner for this issue is Thelma M. Chavous. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email (abhottell@bellsouth.net) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.



Questions and Answers Session - Moderator: Gene Dixon, SRSRA BOD

Panelists: Joe DaVia, DOE-SR; Cary Holbert, SRNS; Donna Adubato, SRMC;

Don Stevenson and Bob Hinds, SRSRA BOD

Previously submitted questions were answered. A summary of the questions and answers provided follows:

NNSA Transition:

- Will the transition to NNSA as the SRS landlord impact the retirees? If so, how and when?

Answer: NNSA has been contributing to the pension plan and post-retirement benefit plans for many years. The share of current funding follows the employee headcount for projects funded by NNSA vs. EM. Over the past few years, as the two new NNSA missions have grown, the share of the pension budget for NNSA has grown as well. They know the process for government budgeting. The plan is for them to have the lead responsibility for pension and retiree benefits starting on October 1.

Health Care Insurance Decisions:

- Why did SRMC split its pensioners out from the rest of the retirees and why move to VIA?

Answer: 1) In the spring of 2023, Right Opt announced their departure from the retiree marketplace, and both SRNS and SRMC evaluated moving toward implementation with Via Benefits. SRNS decided against that course of action. 2) After a thorough search conducted by the Site Benefits Consultant, Willis Towers Watson (WTW), SRMC determined that Via Benefits was the best replacement for Right Opt. Via Benefits was also able to commit to the short runway from April to September to implement and offer guarantee issue plans to our retirees.

- What responsibility does DOE have for management of the benefits to which the contractors have committed? Specifically, responsibility for oversight of the management of healthcare benefits for pensioners.

Answer: DOE's responsibility is to see that the contractors meet the requirements of the retiree benefit plan documents and the law and regulations. We do not tell contractors which vendors to use; we make sure that the

contractors use a competitive proposal process to find their benefit plan providers. We also encourage the contractors to review new plan features that can provide added value for employees or retirees while controlling the cost of the plans.

- SRMC mandated a change in Medicare supplemental insurance for all pensioners getting Medicare in order for them to retain other pension benefits, i.e., the stipend, and limiting choice of supplemental insurance to a single provider. As a result, many pensioners experienced a significant increase in cost for that insurance. Is DOE and SRMC going to allow a stipend increase to offset the increase in health insurance costs resulting from the SRMC mandated change?

Answer: 1) SRMC did not seek out the change to the administration of the benefits for retirees who are post-65 years old. 2) Humana was the only carrier willing to offer guarantee issue coverage to all current post-65 participants and future Age-Ins. The Medical plan was the only plan required to go through Humana. Dental, Vision and Drug Coverage can be obtained through any carrier. The Medicare Supplement Plans offered are individual plans. SRMC provided both options for guarantee issue plans through Medicare Advantage High and Low Options along with access to the Medigap Plans. The plan rates are not controlled by a group contract as they were when retirees were active employees. Medicare supplemental rates can increase at any time. SRMC presently has no plan to increase the stipend.

- Why does VIA take 30 days to process reimbursements from our Humana Medicare premium?

Answer: You are probably waiting 30 days from the time you pay your carrier for the reimbursement to arrive in your bank account from Via Benefits. This is normal processing time for Automatic Premium Reimbursement (APR). With APR, you do not have to submit paperwork for the reimbursement -- this is completed by Humana sending a file with the required details for the reimbursement to be processed (date of service, amount, provider and type of service) and once Via Benefits receives the file from Humana, the reimbursement process starts which is normally just a few days. If you would like reimbursement quickly, you can submit an online request each month with the documentation, and the reimbursement will occur within a few days of the request submission. Or you can submit one request per year, using the recurring reimbursement process, and once this process is set up, the monthly premium reimbursement is processed in the first week of each month. Via Benefits does not take 30 days to process reimbursement. Once the claim is received, standard turnaround time is short, within a few days. SRMC funds the claims each Thursday.

- Is there an exception to reinstate the SRMC stipend for retirees who have lost the stipend due to not signing up for Humana due to already having coverage from a previous job?

Answer: SRMC has allowed the stipend to be deposited for anyone covered under TRICARE or PEBA benefits.

Pension Plan:

- Inflation, as determined by Social Security, has gone up 17.8% in the past 3 yrs. Is there anything that can be done to get a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)?

What is the status of the initiative to provide a COLA for SRS pensioners.

Answer from SRNS and DOE: We appreciate the impact of pension payments to SRS retirees. The two paths to make a request for a cost-of-living adjustment are 1) Make a request through the SRS budget process as follows: a) Send your request in writing to SRNS. The plan is sponsored by SRNS, SRMC, and BSRA/SRNL, but SRNS is the plan administrator, b) The Savings and Pension Administration Investment Committee (SPAIC) will consider the request and make a recommendation to DOE-SR, c) DOE-SR will consider the request, along with Mission Support needs, Operations, and other site costs, as part of the budget planning process. The contents of the federal budget are embargoed (blocked) during the federal budget process, d) The Office of Management and Budget and the President review and negotiate the proposed federal budget, e) The

President submits the budget plan to Congress, f) Congress considers the President's budget proposal and approves funding amounts; and 2) Make a request to members of the Congressional delegation. Members of Congress may be aware of other opportunities to incorporate requests into the budget.

For example, if SRSRA sends a written request to SRNS in November-December 2024, the SPAIC would make a recommendation to DOE in January 2025 and DOE would determine its budget request in February 2025. The OMB and the President would review and negotiate the proposed federal budget from March 2025 through January 2026 and the President would submit the budget plan to Congress in February 2026. Congress considers the President's budget proposal and approves funding amounts in September 2026, with the 2027 Fiscal Year starting in October 2026. Historically, there have been delays in approving the appropriation bills.

SRSRA made a request to SRNS in September 2022, and SRNS made their recommendation to DOE-SR in December 2022. The request was reviewed by DOE-SR and considered with other budget requests. The final contents of the request were sequestered and sent to DOE-HQ for consideration in the President's budget.

Additional information provided by DOE after the Annual Meeting: The pension plan funding has been a priority for the plan sponsors, especially in the past 12 years. In 2012, the assets (investments) in the pension plan covered only 68% of the liabilities (the amount it will cost the employer to pay for promised pension benefits). Congress provided some relief with updated discount rate calculations that adjusted the assets to 80% of the liabilities. At that time, DOE limited the contributions to the pension plans only to the minimum contributions required by law. At that rate, it would take at least eight more years to reach 100% funding. Beginning in 2014, DOE-SR and the plan sponsors asked for approval of additional contributions above the minimum. DOE-HQ later approved this request. As a result, this year the plan reached full funding, four years earlier than expected. That commitment to meeting the pension plan obligation meant that funding other projects on the site was deferred.

Answer from SRSRA: There is a formal process for requesting a pension increase. A formal request for an increase is made to the Contractor that administers the pension plan. The Contractor sends the request to the actuary to determine the amount of funding needed for the requested increase. The increase request and the actuarial analysis are forwarded to DOE-HQ. The additional monies must then either be included in the budget appropriation request or added to the appropriate funding bills. If funded by either means, an increase may occur. This process takes two to three years.

In 3QCY2022 the SRSRA formally requested a 9% pension increase for FY2025. The request was forwarded by the SRNS Benefits Team to the actuary to determine the funding amount required for the increase. The actuarial analysis concluded that \$141M would be required. The increase request and actuarial analysis were forwarded to DOE-HQ. We have been in frequent discussions with Rep. Wilson's staffer and met with him earlier this month. He reviewed the just released budget request and it does not include funding for a COLA. The monies needed must be either added to the budget request or to the appropriations bill. The staffer will work to determine if either of these actions can be achieved. What can you do to further strengthen our request? You can contact your Congressional representatives to ask for support of the 9% COLA increase to our pension and the \$141M in funding needed.

General Business – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

- The minutes of the 2023 SRSRA Annual Meeting were approved.
- The proposed Board of Directors slate was approved.

Door Prize Drawings – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

Ten members were randomly selected to receive \$100 gas cards.

Adjournment – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Contacting Congressional Representatives

If you read the minutes of the SRSRA Annual Membership Meeting you may have noted the suggestion that members contact their congressional representatives. Communications from members directly to elected representatives regarding their benefits is especially important in order to influence legislative actions that affect pensions and benefits. After all, retirees earned those benefits as a result of their civilian service to the people of the United States doing the work necessary to perform the missions of the AEC and the DOE (including the NNSA). The SRSRA can't vote, but its members can (and should). With more than 9000 retirees, direct correspondence with elected officials is particularly influential.

The process for contacting your elected officials at the Federal, State, or Local level to express your feelings about an issue or request information has changed a lot in the age of the internet. Now it's all about e-mail and/or the contact forms found on their official web pages. Most of these web pages have "links" to contact forms and/or email address to which you can and should send your concerns relative to pensions and benefits. Should you choose to use "snail mail" to express your concerns or mail requests, you will also find exact mailing addresses on those web pages. It's important to note that offices can change each election cycle based on seniority, so it's important to identify your elected officials and their addresses each time you contact them.

The first step in communicating with your legislators is to find out which elected officials are yours. If you don't have access to a computer and the internet, the local library can be a good resource. You can also call the U.S. Capital Switchboard Operator at (202) 224-3121 and ask for information.

You can identify your Senators and find their specific office address on the Senate website at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>, or you can use the default address:

The Honorable (Senator's Name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Similarly, you can identify your U.S. Representatives by your address and zip code and get their specific office address on the House web page at <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>, or you can use the default address:

The Honorable (Name) or Representative (Name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Writing a Letter to Your Elected Officials

When you draft your letter to your elected official, be sure to include your phone number and your address (email, if you have one). Depending on the issue, you may be contacted by a member of the official's staff for more information on the topic.

First, tell them why you are writing their office. Example:

"I am writing regarding a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for the pensioners of the contractors for the Department of Energy at the Savannah River Site in Aiken, SC. "

You should also include a statement introducing yourself. It helps to make a personal connection. Example:

"I am one of 9000 retirees from Savannah River Site (SRS). I worked at SRS for (number) years before retiring in (year). I am concerned about the preservation of my benefits, including my pension, earned as a result of my civilian service to our country in missions performed by (Company) for the DOE at SRS. While government employees (and retirees) have had frequent COLA increases since 2002, the SRS retirees have not had an increase in pension. In that same time period, inflation has devalued the pension with an average inflation rate of 2.5%."

And finally, ask them what they plan to do about your issue. If your issue includes an SRS retiree-related topic, consider including a reference to the SRSRA as it may help us help you in future discussions with the elected official, the DOE, and the contractors responsible for our benefits. Example:

"As an SRS retiree that served the DOE as a contractor employee for (number) years, and as a member of the Savannah River Site Retirees Association, I want to know what you are doing to help obtain a COLA for SRS pensioners."

If you do reference the SRSRA in your correspondence, we would appreciate it if you would identify us as a "cc: SRSRA" at the bottom of your written correspondence and send or e-mail to the Resource Center.

SRS Retiree Association, Inc.

P. O. Box 5686,

Aiken, SC 29804

e-mail: SRSRA@srsretirees.org

