



SRSRA NEWSLETTER

For SRS Retiree Association Members Bruce Cadotte, Editor Volume 18, No. 1, March 2015
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SRS Retiree Association Notice of Annual Membership Meeting

**TUESDAY, APRIL 14
USC-AIKEN
ETHERREDGE CENTER
Registration 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Meeting 1:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.**

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2015 ANNUAL MEETING

Each year the Board of Directors of the Savannah River Site Retiree Association (SRSRA) holds an annual meeting to discuss the financial, political and overall outlook for retired Site employees. This year's meeting will be held on April 14, 2015 at the Etherredge Center on the University of South Carolina Aiken Campus. Member registration will begin at 11 a.m. and the meeting will start promptly at 1:30 p.m. It is expected to conclude at about 4 p.m.

Guests invited to this year's meeting include management from the Department of Energy-SR, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions and Savannah River Remediation, politicians from South Carolina and Georgia, and various organizations who provide important services to the Site retirees. Those service organizations will set up tables and be available to provide information about their services to retirees. Their tables will be open from 11 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. to discuss various issues one-on-one (See p. 3). Be sure to register before the break to be eligible for door prizes.

See the letter from the SRSRA Chair John Veldman on page 3 for additional information on the program.

The Etherredge Center is located on the University of South Carolina Aiken campus. Information about how to find the center and where to park can be found at srsretirees.org. The center's address is: 471 University Parkway, Aiken, SC 29801 (803-641-3327). The capacity of the center is about 700 people and we are expecting a capacity crowd. Attendees are encouraged to carpool with one or two others because school will be in session and the four parking lots are expected to be in high demand.

Any questions about the meeting can be addressed to Ed Leibfarth (706-833-8272), e-mail desmin@comcast.net.

DRAFT AGENDA (As of March 14)

Call to Order	John Veldman, SRSRA Chair
State of SRSRA	John Veldman, John Plodinec
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communications and Relationships• Pension Adjustment Proposal• Retiree Health Care Plan Review• Resource Center Start-up• Treasurer's Report	
DOE, SRS and Retirees	Dr. Dave Moody, Manager, DOE-SR
(There will also be brief presentations by SRS contractor management)	
Break (15 Minutes)	
Questions and Answers	John Veldman
General Business	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval of the 2014 Annual Meeting Minutes• Board of Directors Elections	Fred Cadek
Door Prize Drawings*	Rick Geddes
(*NOTE: MUST REGISTER BEFORE THE BREAK TO BE ELIGIBLE, AND MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN.)	
Adjournment	John Veldman

Organizations Available During Registration

The following organizations have indicated they will have people available for discussion during meeting registration.

- SRS Retiree Resource Center
- Energy Employee Compensation Resource Center
- SRNS People Support Service Center
- My Medicare Advocate (RightOpt)
- Wage Works
- Oak Ridge/ORISE Health Studies Administration
- Social Security Administration
- SRS Employee Association
- United Way
- Lower Savannah Council of Governments
- Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness
- Family Y of Aiken County
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield of South Carolina
- Kroc Center

Draft Minutes of the 2014 Annual Meeting

John Plodinec, Chair of the Savannah River Site Retiree Association (SRSRA), called the 2014 Annual Members Meeting to order by welcoming all attendees and introducing himself. He told the group that they would hear about new initiatives by the Board of Directors (BOD). He also noted that the Annual Members Meeting is an important means for the board hearing from the members as to what issues need to be addressed.

He then reviewed some logistics, such as silencing all cell phones and locations for exits and restrooms. He asked the members to write down their questions on the cards provided. In the past time has not permitted BOD members to answer all questions. With the questions written on cards, he promised that all questions would be answered at the meeting or published in the next newsletter.

He reviewed the agenda and told the audience that a large part of the meeting would be devoted to activities that the BOD has been pursuing, based on input from the members during past annual meetings. He then asked for a moment of silence for fallen heroes, those serving military and members who have passed on.

John reminded the members that the association and the BOD are not associated with the Department of Energy (DOE) or its contractors. The BOD is the voice of retirees, and members are all volunteers. He told the group that BOD members have been communicating with the site much more than in the past and asked that members notify the BOD with any changes in addresses and/or phone numbers.

John continued with his talk about the association by explaining that retirees have faced many changes in the past years. The stipend for those on Medicare is as good as, if not better than, any in the DOE Complex. The

Annual Meeting Letter From the SRSRA Chair

Fellow Retirees,

I would like to invite each of you to attend our Annual Meeting on April 14th at the USCA Etherredge Center. During the past year, your Board has made substantial progress on a pension adjustment proposal, provided significant input to the 2015 retiree health care plan review, and has started up the Resource Center to assist retirees with insurance, reimbursement, and other issues. We would like to discuss highlights of these initiatives, and give you an opportunity to ask questions. Dr. David Moody, DOE-SR Site Manager, and Ms. Carol Johnson, President of SRNS, have also been invited to make brief remarks. As in the past, key service providers will have booths, there will be a drawing for door prizes for attendees who register before the break, and you will have the opportunity to interact and reconnect with your fellow retirees. Please mark the date on your calendar!

John Veldman, SRSRA Chair

BOD members have worked hard on the initial problems with signing up for a Medigap policy. They continue to help members who need assistance in filing for the stipend. He encouraged members to use the entire stipend each year, because, for instance, if they pass away without a spouse who is using the stipend, the balance of the stipend will be returned to the site.

Retirees who are under age 65 and not eligible for Medicare have had their insurance "carved out" and a new policy has been created for them. The site's objective is to have this group pay 25 percent of the benefit in five years, the same as site employees are paying currently. This has come with cost increases. Retirees who are disabled and not eligible for Medicare have been allowed to stay on the site plan for retirees.

At this point in the program, John stopped his presentation and introduced Representative Joe Wilson. Representative Wilson told the audience that he understood the problems the retirees were facing. There have been major changes to their health insurance; filing for claims is difficult, especially if the retiree does not use a computer. However, he noted that his office is willing to help. He is committed to helping the elderly, the poor, and sick. His office is a resource that all retirees can use. His Aiken office is located in the new Aiken County Administrative Building.

John recognized the elected officials who were represented by their staffs, including Ted Felder, Representative Joe Wilson's Special Assistant in Aiken; Rene Ann Brown; Senator Lindsey Graham's State Project Coordinator; John Kelly Long, Senator Tim Scott's Regional Director; and Nancy Bobbitt, Senator Johnny Isakson's Augusta Field Representative.

Senator Graham sent a letter thanking John for the invitation to the meeting and regretting that he was unable to attend. His letter offered his continued support of the SRSRA.

John expressed his appreciation for the support the SRSRA has received from the Congressional delegation.

John then resumed his presentation. The BOD has developed strategic approaches to deal with selected issues and to be better prepared for the future. These are:

- Resource Center
- Pension increase
- Communications
- Site support

The BOD stands ready to assist with health insurance problems. John recognized Rick Geddes for all of his assistance in answering the many health insurance questions he and the BOD have received. He also recognized John Veldman and the Benefits Protection Committee members for taking the lead for the strategic direction of the BOD. First, the Resource Center will be a place for answers to many insurance problems retirees have. Some of the services that will be available through the Resource Center include:

- Help retirees to better file for reimbursement for medical costs and/or premiums using the stipend
- For retirees aging into Medicare, help retirees determine how to sign up for Medicare and Medigap policies
- Refer retiree to other agencies for specific problems
- Help retirees find ways to more affordably obtain non-formulary drugs
- Help those who live outside the Central Savannah River Area

The most important goal is to help the poor, old, and sick – those who need the help the most.

However, John noted that the success of the center will depend on volunteers. Volunteers will receive training on Medicare, WageWorks processes, and other needed skills. With this training, they will be better able to handle their own situation and will gain satisfaction from helping fellow retirees. He asked for volunteers to sign up in the lobby.

The Benefits Protection Committee, led by John Veldman, is developing a proposal for a pension increase.

For any changes to benefits, communications are critical. One of the lessons the SRSRA BOD members have learned from the last two⁺ years is that the Association must be more proactive and consistent in its communications. John Lindsay and the Public Relations Committee members have developed a communications plan and begun implementation.

The SRSRA will continue to be the source of timely and accurate information for its members through its website and newsletters. More than ever before, the Retiree Association will proactively pursue solutions to problems – resource center, drugs, doctors, potential pension increase, etc. John reminded the audience that the SRS retirees' problems are as much national as they are local. However, the members will be the source of strength and with greater membership, there is a greater potential impact on any issue.

In summary, John told the group that the BOD will continue to work for retirees by protecting what retirees have earned and will continue to seek ways to improve service for retirees. He asked the members to become involved in the association and work to get other retirees involved, tell the BOD their problems, and tell the BOD members how they can serve retirees better.

John then asked the members to write their questions on the cards provided and pass them to ushers, telling them that he would answer as many as he could later. He introduced Dr. David Moody. John told the audience that Dr. Moody has shown excellent leadership and worked to improve communications between the two organizations. Dr. Moody continues to provide dynamic and vocal support for the site.

Dr. Moody told the attendees that he and the SRSRA BOD representatives have re-started communications. A DOE-hosted Town Hall meeting was held in December 2013 and another is planned for June 2014. He also stated that the SRSRA input would be solicited on any metrics and improvements to the My Medicare Advocate program and for any changes to the medical stipend amount.

The balance of his presentation focused on safety and security at the site and site missions.

There was a question and answer period. After a break, a business meeting session was held. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting, as provided in the newsletter.

Fred Cadek, Chair of the Nomination Committee, presented the membership with the following list of new candidates to the Board of Directors:

Kathy Grant
Ronald Malanowski
Richard Seif
Robert Malstrom
James Tisaranni (1 year)
Thomas Varallo (1 year)

A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the list by acclamation.

Harvey Kinder, Chair of the Bylaws Committee, provided a quick summary of the proposed bylaw changes. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the bylaw changes.

Door prize drawings were held next with the following winners:

Gas cards from the SRS Employee Association, \$50 each: Keith Stawney, Betty Lepard, Pat Wiley and Wyman Crapps.

Gift cards from the SRS Employee Association, \$100 each: Janice Clarke, Alex Guanlao, Sadie Bell, Jim Howell.

SRSRA gift cards: Johnny Price, Damon Haley, Allen Morris, Rex Nordeen and Charles Jenkins, \$100 each; Jan Daniels, \$200; Patricia Jenkins, \$300.

In closing, John thanked the Savannah River Site Employee Association for their generous gift of gas cards and gift cards. He asked that retirees consider becoming volunteers to help all retirees and reminded all to be careful driving home. A motion was made, seconded and passed to adjourn the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Update on Pension Adjustment and Retiree Health Plan Review

In a January meeting with members of the SRSRA Board, Dr. David Moody, DOE-SR Site Manager, announced that he would not recommend our pension adjustment proposal. This took place after two months of consultation with DOE headquarters. Budget priorities and uncertainty in future funding were cited as the reasons for his decision. He also noted that he might be able to offer assistance through the post-65 retiree health plan, but he offered no specifics.

We have redrafted the written material that we use to present the pension adjustment issue to our elected representatives. Due to the additional delay in receiving a pension adjustment, and the input we have received from hundreds of retirees at the Resource Center, we have adjusted our proposal from an average of 4.4 percent to an average of 6.2 percent, using the same “flat dollar” approach that gives the oldest retirees with the smallest pensions the largest percentage increases. We feel that this is still a fiscally responsible proposal. The total cost would be \$43 million, which could be amortized over seven years at \$7 million per year.

We have already started interactions with our elected delegation to advance this proposal.

In the same January meeting, the 2015 post-65 retiree health care plan review was discussed. DOE-SR and the site contractors acknowledged the comprehensive and professional input contained in the SRSRA white paper on this subject we submitted to them in December. The 20-page white paper covered comparisons with other similar plans, potential stipend evaluation metrics, a prescription drug “stop loss” proposal, and stipend plan rules that have an adverse impact on some retirees. Although SRSRA understands that we can’t negotiate in this review process, we expressed a desire for interim interactions before decisions are made. DOE-SR committed to at least one interim discussion before completing the review in August. DOE-SR and the site contractors said that they felt that they would address many of the issues noted in the SRSRA white paper.

Resource Center Progress Report

Last September, the Board of Directors formed the SRS Retiree Resource Center in partnership with the Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG). Since then, the Center has helped SRS retirees to make the most of their health care benefits. Following are some of the Center's accomplishments over the past six months (as reported by Center Coordinator Laureen Feinman):

Retirees have visited the Center 436 times at the LSCOG building. Center personnel have made five home visits, and answers literally hundreds of telephone queries, since its inception--assisting 398 different clients. Since beginning to collect data in December, the Center has helped retirees gain \$186,000 in reimbursements. Our volunteers are now also conducting monthly meetings for retirees who will be turning age 65 and aging in to Medicare. These group sessions allow retirees to ask questions to help them with their decisions about Medicare supplements and Part D drug plans.

Not surprisingly, more than two-thirds of the issues reported by retirees had to do with WageWorks payments, enrolling in insurance plans, or reviewing prescription plan options.

Several common issues have emerged during the Center's activities.

- There is a real concern about stipend inadequacy in the future. Increases in insurance premiums and medical costs are inevitable while pensions and the stipend are fixed. Having balances left in WageWorks accounts does not mean the retirees don't need the money. Rather it often means either retirees have been unable to access the WageWorks accounts successfully, or they are using the balance to save today's stipend for tomorrow's increased insurance premiums. Many retirees are afraid they might not be able to afford coverage in later years.
- Some retirees have inadvertently let their coverage lapse because premiums were not paid. The automatic premium reimbursement features do not seem to be functioning well at all.
- The systems used by the vendors (WageWorks and MMA) heavily favor computer online use and telephone use--often with very long holding periods and confusing recording messages--while much of the retiree population is not very computer literate. Many of our older retirees need personal support to make good decisions.
- The coverages provided by the stipend are not very well coordinated with military and state health care plans.

The Resource Center is continuing to train volunteers who help in a number of different ways. Please contact Laureen Feinman at LFeinman@lscog.org if you are interested in learning more about the Center. This really is a great program and the work is very rewarding.

Resource Center Contacts

Phone: (803) 508-7033 (866) 845-1550 (toll free)

Internet: srsra@lscog.org, resourcecenter@srsretirees.org

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: LSCOG Building, 2748 Wagener Rd., Aiken (next to Aiken Electric Co-op, across from Aiken Pest Control)

Resource Center Coordinator: Ms. Laureen Feinman, lfeinman@lscog.org

United Way Final Results

SRSRA Members ultimately contributed \$20,500 through the Association's August campaign. Congratulations! SRSRA sent almost 1,200 solicitations which basically went to members living in the CSRA who are potentially served by the local United Way organizations. The *Aiken Standard* covered the contribution with a photo.

Newsletter Information

Questions and comments related to this newsletter may be addressed to **Bruce Cadotte, newsletter editor, at newsletter@srsretirees.org, or Newsletter, SRS Retiree Association, P.O. Box. 5686, Aiken, SC 29804.**

If you have a new e-mail address, or have changed your address recently and are not receiving SRSRA communications by e-mail, please contact newsletter@srsretirees.org. Our e-mail program allows us to reach members more quickly with news. Other pluses are quicker distribution of the newsletter and less cost of copying and mailing hard copies. Thanks to all of you who are receiving your newsletter by e-mail.

Congratulations to George L. Webb, winner of a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Call Neal Smith at 706-481-0970 or 706-833-1289 within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact him.

BENEFITS CONTACTS

- ◆ **Benefits Service Center (a one-stop service for most HR and payroll activities and questions):**
 - **803-725-7772 (local area SC and GA)**
 - **800-368-7333 (toll free)**
 - **service-center@srs.gov (e-mail contact for this service)**
- ◆ **Westinghouse Corp. Pension** 800-581-4222
- ◆ **My Medicare Advocate** 877-591-8904; www.mymedicareadvocate.com/srs
- ◆ **WageWorks** 877-924-3967; www.wageworks.com
- ◆ **Medicare Helpline** 800-633-4227
- ◆ **Medicare Web Site:** www.medicare.gov
- ◆ **Blue Cross/Blue Shield of SC** 800-325-6596;
www.southcarolinablues.com
Option 1 for Medical
Option 2 for Dental
Option 3 for Pre-Cert/Med Authorization

Congratulations to W. Dale Nichols, winner of a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Call Neal Smith at 706-481-0970 or 706-833-1289 within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact him.

Congressional Delegation Members for the Aiken/Augusta Area

Because the huge majority of the SRSRA members live in the CSRA and nearby areas, we thought it might be helpful to list the local mailing addresses of the members of the U.S. Congress and Senate from the area, particularly since some of them have recently changed.

Sen. Lindsey Graham
c/o Ms. Rene Ann Brown
503 Hampton St
Columbia, SC 29201

Sen. Tim Scott
c/o Mr. John Kelly Long
Suite 825
1301 Gervais St.
Columbia, SC 29201

Rep. Joe Wilson
c/o Ms. Sarah Beaulieu
P.O. Box 104
Aiken, SC 29802

Rep. James Clyburn
c/o Ms. Amanda Loveday
1225 Lady St.
Suite 200
Columbia, SC 29201

Rep. Jeff Duncan
c/o Mr. Rick Adkins
303 W. Beltline Blvd.
Anderson, SC 29625

Sen. Johnny Isakson
c/o Ms. Nancy Bobbitt
P.O. Box 2884
Evans, GA 30809

Rep. Rick Allen
c/o Brinsley Thigpen
2743 Perimeter Pkwy.
Bldg. 200 Suite 225
Augusta, GA 30909

Rep. Jody Hice
c/o Josh Findley
210 Railroad St.
Room 2401
Thomson, GA 30824

Sen. David Perdue
(no local office
established at press time)

Interested in serving on the SRSRA Board of Directors?

Please e-mail Fred Cadek, Nomination Chairman, at ffcadek@gforcecable.com

Congratulations to Ted M. Stringfield, winner of a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Call Neal Smith at 706-481-0970 or 706-833-1289 within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact him.

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Savannah River Site Retiree Association Membership Application

_____ I want to RENEW my membership in the SRSRA
(...and I am willing to serve on the Board of Directors) _____ Yes _____ No

_____ I want to JOIN the SRSRA
(...and I am willing to serve on the Board of Directors) _____ Yes _____ No

_____ My spouse is also retired from SRS and wants to JOIN the SRSRA
(...and my retired SRS spouse is willing to serve on the Board of Directors) _____ Yes _____ No

_____ I am the surviving spouse of an SRS retiree and wish to JOIN/RENEW my membership in the SRSRA
(...and I am willing to serve on the Board of Directors) _____ Yes _____ No

Annual Dues:

Current Year (2015)

_____ \$25 for Retiree

_____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (also retired from SRS)

_____ \$5 for Retiree's Surviving Spouse

Next Year (2016)

_____ \$25 for Retiree

_____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (also retired from SRS)

_____ \$5 for Retiree's Surviving Spouse

SRS RETIREE NAME _____

SRS Retired or Surviving SPOUSE'S NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ TELEPHONE _____

SRS RETIREE RETIRED FROM: SRNS _____ WSRC/SRR _____ BSRI _____ BWXT-SRC _____ BNFL-SRC _____ OTHER _____

SPOUSE RETIRED FROM SRS: SRNS _____ WSRC/SRR _____ BSRI _____ BWXT-SRC _____ BNFL-SRC _____ OTHER _____

SRS RETIREE: DATE OF RETIREMENT _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Providing your e-mail address gives SRSRA permission to send you major Association communications by e-mail instead of paper mail.

SRS RETIRED OR SURVIVOR SPOUSE: DATE OF RETIREMENT _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Providing your e-mail address gives SRSRA permission to send you major Association communications by e-mail instead of paper mail.

Return to: **SRS Retiree Association**
P. O. Box 5686
Aiken, SC 29804
Attn: Membership Chairman