



North Carolina Retired School Personnel

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MONTHLY REPORT: February 28, 2018

NCRSP State Convention just two weeks away

Delegates can limber up and taste a local specialty when NCRSP holds its 2018 State Convention March 14th and 15th at the Marriott Hotel in Winston-Salem. If all goes as planned, a Tai Chi class, Moravian cookies, scarves, craft jewelry and affordable fine art will be on offer.

The **CONVENTION SCHEDULE** is as follows:

Wednesday, March 14

9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Registration
9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Exhibits/Vendors
9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Fundraiser (Silent Auction)
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Representative Assembly
6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Recognitions Banquet

Thursday, March 15

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Registration
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Fundraiser (Silent Auction)
8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Mini-Sessions
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Representative Assembly

Silent Auction - NCRSP will host a Silent Auction on Wednesday, March 14th (9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) and Thursday, March 15th (9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.) during the state convention. Each local unit is asked to donate a sellable item for the Silent Auction with a minimum value of \$25 (members may also donate items for the auction). All auction items are to be brought to the hotel by Tuesday afternoon, March 13th OR early on the morning of March 14th. The proceeds from the auction will generate funds that are a key part of the work done by the NC Foundation for Public School Children! If you have any questions regarding the auction, please contact Tama Bouncer via email at: t mrb049@gmail.com.

Friendly Competition - The Silent Auction isn't the only opportunity to support the NC Foundation for Public School Children. The community service event for the 2018 NCRSP State Convention is a friendly competition between the ten regions to see which region can present the biggest check payable to NCFPSC. Checks will be received on March 14th at the Convention (Marriott Hotel, Winston-Salem) and the winning region will be announced at the Representative Assembly on Thursday, March 15th. One director from each region is asked to bring his or her region's check to Winston-Salem and present it—in an unopened envelope—to a member of the NCRSP staff or to President Joan Bass. As mentioned above, the winning region will be announced at the RA—along with the total sum received from all regions. So please

announce this competition in your region, form a work team and get going! You have until March 14th to amass your donation and cut a check!

Keynote Speaker - Caroline Farmer, Executive Director of the NC Commission on Volunteerism & Community Service will deliver the keynote address on Wednesday. Ms. Farmer worked for several years in Governor Hunt's administration as an Agency Liaison and Director of Highway Beautification. Prior to joining Attorney General Roy Cooper's staff in 2003, she was in private practice. At the Attorney General's office, she oversaw public education efforts statewide on topics such as identity theft, financial exploitation of older adults, Internet safety for children, etc. (our members may recall that she has given several fraud prevention presentations at NCRSP events). She will bring greetings from Gov. Roy Cooper, address the continuing importance of volunteer service and—perhaps—drop a few hints about fraud prevention for seniors.

Snacks - Some vendors may offer cookies or candy for attendees, but the only meal function included in the convention will be the Recognitions Banquet on Wednesday night. For reasons of cost, lunches and snack breaks are not included as part of the 2018 convention, so delegates may want to arrange their own lunches and bring their own snacks. The Marriott has a good restaurant and numerous other restaurants—offering everything from sandwiches to fancy fare—are located within easy walking distance.

See you in Winston-Salem!

2018-19 TSERS Prospects: ARC: Probably yes—COLA: Uh, maybe. . .

NCRSP lobbyists Pam Deardorff and Dr. Lacy Presnell attended the January 25 meeting of the NC Retirement System Board of Trustees and spoke on behalf of retirees—including support for the Annual Required Contribution (ARC) to the retirement system fund and a Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) for retirees. Here are two excerpts from their report about the Teachers & State Employees Retirement System (TSERS)—along with comments from the NCRSP Central Office:

“For TSERS, the recommendation to the board from the actuary and staff was to increase the employer contribution rate by 1.20 percent. This would take the current contribution rate of 10.78% to 11.98%. The Board approved this recommendation and will submit this to the General Assembly members for their consideration.”

[Comment: Assuming that the General Assembly goes along with this recommendation, it's good news and would help keep our retirement system strong. Indeed, North Carolina's public retirement system is consistently rated as one of the strongest in the nation. Anyone who compares our retirement system to struggling programs in states like Illinois or California is peddling a falsehood. Here we must give credit to the General Assembly for maintaining the ARC over many years—even decades. That is sound fiscal policy.]

“Unfortunately, there was no recommendation presented to the Board by their actuary or staff to fund a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). A quote from materials distributed at the meeting stated, ‘Based on the actuarial losses recognized in this December 31, 2016 valuation, no COLA effective July 1, 2018 could be funded by actuarial gains.’ NOTE: A 1% COLA would cost about \$43 million per year, which the General Assembly would have to fund entirely, since there are no gains available from investments.”

[Comment: This is not good news. Last year, the General Assembly approved a 1% COLA for retirees. Given the lack of a recommendation for a COLA next year, the job of convincing legislators to approve one will be even tougher. Obtaining a COLA will require an all-out effort—not only by our dedicated lobbyists—but also by our members too!]

“Seven Questions” available on web site and here...

Fake news, partisan cant, ideological bias, right wing spin, left wing spin—haven’t we heard it all? How is a person supposed to cut through all the fog and make good decisions about our state’s political candidates—especially candidates for the NC General Assembly? This revised and updated list of “Seven Questions” can help you or your group evaluate a candidate’s commitment to retirement security and public education. The following document will also be available on the NCRSP web site.

NCRSP’s Seven Questions to Ask Any Candidate for The General Assembly

Virtually all candidates for public office will insist that they support retiree security and the public schools, but for too many of them, it’s just lip service. The devil is in the details. We suggest that when you meet each candidate during the campaign or elsewhere—ask these questions. Do not settle for less than specific, satisfactory answers, and if you don’t get them, consider the competing candidate. *[NOTE: This is an NCRSP discussion guide. NCAE conducts a candidate endorsement process, and the results of that activity will be available during the spring and summer of 2018.]*

(01) Do you support restoring health insurance benefits for state employee retirees who will be hired on or after January 1, 2021?

[The correct answer is “YES.” This will require a repeal of legislation passed last year by the majority party in the General Assembly. They voted to take retiree health insurance coverage away from state employees who are hired on or after Jan. 1, 2021.]

(02) Do you support sustaining North Carolina’s current retirement system as a defined benefit plan?

[The correct answer is “YES.” Beware of any candidate who supports a change to a “defined contribution plan,” to 401Ks or to “portable” self-funded plans.]

(03) Do you support Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for retired teachers and state employees in your district (to help them keep up with increases in consumer prices)?

[The correct answer is “YES.” State retirees are losing earning power because COLAs aren’t keeping pace with increases in consumer prices. Last year—after a great deal of struggle—we got a mere 1%!]

(04) Do you support bringing North Carolina’s teacher pay up to at least the national average?

[The answer should be “YES.” North Carolina is the 9th largest state by population, but our teacher pay is 35th in the nation—that’s still \$9,000 behind the national average.]

(05) Do you support bringing North Carolina’s per pupil spending up to the national average?

[The correct answer is “Yes.” In 2017 the national average per pupil expenditure was almost \$12,000, but North Carolina spends an average of only \$8,940 per student--that’s 43rd in the nation—source NEA.]

(06) Will you support tax increases on corporations and high-income earners to get our state to the national averages mentioned above?

[The correct answer is “YES.” Our General Assembly cut the corporate tax rate from 6.9% in 2013 to 3% today, and majority party lawmakers want to cut it again to 2.5% in 2019. NC already has the lowest corporate tax rates of states that have one. Meanwhile, we are 43rd in per pupil spending. Our public schools lack books, adequate staff and must choose between smaller class sizes and things like art classes, music education and PE.]

(07) Do you support transferring public school funds to create and support private voucher schools (also known as “school choice”)?

[The correct answer is “NO.” Private school voucher schemes lack full public accountability and these voucher schools have not proven to be more effective than public schools. Worst of all, voucher schools are draining millions of dollars from the public schools. Beware of any candidate who calls for “school choice!”]