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The Solon

The newsletter for members of the General Assembly Retirement System of Illinois

 [srs.illinois.gov](https://www.srs.illinois.gov)



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Update your Member Services contact information to receive the latest news, announcements or deadlines.

Your benefit statement

Enclosed with this Solon is your current benefit statement. This statement contains detailed information about your GARS benefits.

You may change your beneficiaries at any time by completing and filing Form 7101 (Beneficiary Nomination) with GARS.

Remember, your group life insurance beneficiaries are separate from your GARS beneficiaries. The Minnesota Life Insurance Company, a Securian brand, maintains your life insurance beneficiary information. To update your life insurance beneficiaries, contact Minnesota Life at 888-202-5525. Their office hours are Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

If you have questions about your statement, call us at 217-782-8500.

Changes in GARS staff

On December 1, 2017, Jayne Waldeck retired after more than 40 years of service with the State Retirement Systems. Jayne served in various positions, including SERS Manager of Pensions, GARS Assistant Manager in October 2000 and GARS Manager in June 2006.

Jayne will continue to work intermittently in order to train Angie Ackerson, who became GARS Manager on January 2, 2018. Angie brings 17 years of public retirement experience to GARS, after serving in various positions with the Teachers' Retirement System of Illinois, most recently as a Senior Benefits Counselor. She earned an MBA from Benedictine University-Springfield in June 2016 and is completing a graduate certificate in IT project management at the University of Illinois-Springfield.

Congratulations to Jayne on her recent retirement and her new granddaughter, Stella Jayne, and to Angie on her position with GARS! Jayne will be missed but be assured that Angie and the GARS staff will continue to provide the highest level of service to GARS members.



Tax Information

1099-R

In January, the Office of the Comptroller mailed IRS Form 1099-Rs for 2017 GARS benefit payments to all annuitants and survivors. These payments must be reported on IRS Form 1040 under the Income section (pensions and annuities).

Federal income tax withholding

Due to the recent federal tax reform, new federal tax tables will be implemented in February. If your federal tax withholding is based on the tax tables, your February benefit check will likely be subject to less tax withholding, and your February check will be higher than your January check.

We recommend you securely view your monthly check stubs through the SRS Member Services website at memberservices.srs.illinois.gov to see details of your deductions and history of transactions.

If you need to change the amount of your federal tax withholding or need to have additional tax withheld for outside income such as interest, dividends, capital gains, etc., you can submit a new W-4P to GARS. The W-4P is available at [srs.illinois.gov](https://www.srs.illinois.gov), under the Forms link and a new W-4P may be submitted at any time. *Note – GARS is unable to withhold state tax for any state other than Illinois.*

You should contact a qualified tax advisor or an IRS representative at 800-829-1040 with questions about your taxes, including withholdings.

New tax rates for 2018 have been released this month and will go into effect on your February 2018 benefit check.

GARS is getting a new look

As we modernize our operations, we have decided to update our look and logo as well. Our new logo (seen in the header) will be implemented in stages and we will have all materials rebranded with our new look and logo by the end of 2018.

This is our new logo.



You might also see the following logo if we send a publication to State Employees' Retirement System members, Judges' Retirement System members and General Assembly Retirement System members at the same time. These are the three retirement systems that are in our building. We will also be using this logo on envelopes to save cost instead of printing three separate ones.



Moved recently? Update your address.

Updating your address is easy. Fill out the Member Change of Address/Member Information Form 7501 and mail it to us or email it to gars@srs.illinois.gov.

You can find Form 7501 on our website under the Forms link or on the Member Services website.

Text message updates available soon

In our effort to better communicate with our members, we are implementing a cell phone texting system. If you have a cell phone number on file with us, we will send you text messages with important messages. We plan on piloting the system in January/February '18 with a full implementation in the Spring of '18. We will provide an "opt-out" for those who don't want to receive texts.

Be smart about your retirement information. Come to the source.

Visit srs.illinois.gov for more information.



Visit us online

Did you know you could access a copy of all publications on our website? This includes the newsletters, handbooks and brochures. You can also find helpful information regarding your insurance, any news about upcoming legislation, survivor benefit information and much more. Check us out at srs.illinois.gov.

Senior discounts

Many restaurants, grocery stores, retail stores and travel companies offer senior discounts of which you may not be aware. Are you taking full advantage of the savings available to you?

Some of the places specify that you must be a certain age to qualify while others are benefits for AARP members. Some discounts are only available on specific days of the week. Be sure to double check any that are listed on the following website to be sure the establishment will honor the discount prior to arriving.

Check seniorcitizendiscountlist.org and click on your state for a full list of places you can save.

