

GMRA - Setting the record straight . . .

The General Motors Retirees Association (GMRA) is organizing as a 501(c)4 entity through the efforts of three GM salaried retirees: Vic Poleni, James Shepherd and myself, John Christie.

Unlike the many GM salaried retiree clubs and online communities across the U.S., the **primary purpose** of the GMRA is to advocate for our constituency – salaried retirees and surviving spouses - in the areas of pension and benefits. With the potential of a GM bankruptcy or further government intervention growing stronger by the day, we believe that GM salaried retirees and surviving spouses must unite in a manner that provides legal standing. This is the best way of ensuring that our voices will be heard and our interests considered by GM, Congress, the White House and, unfortunately but very possibly, a bankruptcy court.

Let me tell you a short story that illustrates the power of an association like the General Motors Retiree Association.

By way of background, you may know that Delphi requested permission to terminate the health care and life insurance of its salaried retirees during its bankruptcy hearing. The judge granted that request. A Section 1114 Committee formed by the Delphi Salaried Retiree Association (DSRA) kept the story from ending on that sad note.

DSRA negotiated funding of a Voluntary Employee Benefit Association for the Delphi salaried retiree group. As a result, those with the greatest financial hardship due to loss of benefits will be able to receive some assistance. Even more significantly, all will qualify for tax credits on premiums paid to obtain health coverage.

The General Motors Retiree Association has affiliated with the National Retiree Legislative Network to assist us in organizing quickly and effectively and to maximize our impact. NRLN is providing the same type of support to us that they provided to DSRA. This has allowed us to:

- utilize NRLN's Capwiz system to contact registered GM retirees, creating awareness of the GMRA and the method by which they may join the effort
- obtain assistance with the establishment of our organization, e.g. articles of incorporation, bylaw development and steps to achieving non-profit status
- get a basic website up and running to support our communications and membership strategies
- establish a relationship with the Ford, Chrysler and Delphi retiree associations

GMRA is convinced that affiliation with NRLN provides significant benefits to our membership, both in terms of support for our fledgling organization and advocacy of issues affecting all retirees. I urge you to go to the NRLN website at www.nrln.org to learn about the mission of the NRLN, its Legislative Agenda and actions on behalf of retirees.

As we continue to contact GM retiree clubs across the country, we have been heartened to find wide support for GMRA's efforts to form a national organization. Many of you clearly understand the value of a dedicated advocacy organization for GM retirees - one that seeks to protect the interests of GM retirees while still supporting the company's efforts to survive the current crisis and sustain itself for the long-term.

Beyond the immediate crisis affecting GM, there are many other potential threats for retirees – Social Security, Medicare, taxation – and the list goes on. As I write this, the NRLN is drafting plans for a major Summer and Fall effort to lobby for inclusion of catastrophic coverage, filling the Medicare D plan donut hole and getting Medicare buy-in at cost for retirees under age 65 in any form of national health care. We lost these benefits when GM cancelled health care for those of us over age 65. GMRA, through its association with NRLN, intends to work to restore these benefits. GMRA will also endeavor to share information of importance and interest to our members, not only in reference to GM but to the overall retiree landscape.

If you have not already registered as a GMRA member, join the growing number of GM retirees who have done so through the "Join Us" link at www.gmret.org. Also, click on the "About Us" link to see the open positions on the GMRA Board and consider volunteering for one of these positions or send an email to serve the GMRA in some other capacity. Please consider making a membership contribution of \$25 or greater if you are able to do so. Funds raised are dedicated to development of a legal defense fund, member communications and legislative initiatives, including the modest NRLN association fee. As you all know, it takes money to procure the kind of professional resources GMRA will need as we go forward. All GMRA organizational positions are unpaid.

Thanks again for your continuing support and encouragement. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any other GMRA leadership team member with your questions and suggestions.

John Christie, Interim President

General Motors Retiree Association

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