

Living power

For all who have made a living and now wish to make a life



North Carolina

Retired
Governmental
Employees'
Association

Volume 36, Number 4

July-August 2020

President's Message

By V. Vann Langston

Each year, someone is blessed to serve as your association president. I am honored to serve you as the 2020-2021 Board President for our Association. You can't imagine how thrilled I am to be associated with such a dedicated group of retired public servants as the membership of NCRGEA.

While we continue to work through difficult times, I'd like to remind us of the four purposes of government as stated in the Preamble of the United States Constitution. I think they speak to our call as public servants and to the purpose of government:

- Establish justice;
- Insure domestic tranquility;
- Provide for the common defense;
- Promote the general welfare.

Please think about these four purposes. Each one of us who worked in state and local government spent our careers fulfilling those very purposes—for every North Carolinian! This is an accomplishment of which we all should be immensely proud. Our work has made our state the wonderful place it is.

I bet you are still helping fellow North Carolinians as we all seek to persevere through the COVID pandemic. That is what we do! But please be careful and stay safe. Our Association is doing more too. You will continue to hear more from us going forward.

It is interesting that during crises like our current pandemic or other exigencies such as wars, we all come to appreciate the essential and necessary role government plays, the role our founding fathers created. I am concerned that in the last twelve years or so, it seems like the public is less appreciative of both



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NCRGEA
District Map

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President's Message *cont'd*

the role of government and the men and women who service in state and local government.

NCRGEA understands that developing a truer and deeper appreciation of government and public servants is the key to our securing better funding and support for government retirees. One hopes the pandemic will help refocus our fellow North Carolinians to better appreciate the services of government and the work of government employees.

You can help us share this message. Remind your friends that it is government and government employees who deliver the services promised by our country's Founding Fathers. When you speak with your legislators, county commissioners, and city council members, remind them of how society depends on the dedication and hard work of state and local employees.

There is strength in numbers. We are 65,000 members strong! Do you think we could be an even more effective voice for retirees if we were 150,000 strong? There are in fact, 230,000 retirees who could join NCRGEA. If we each recruit one friend, we could come very close to 150,000 members and have a much more powerful voice in the legislature and in each county and municipality.

Rest assured the NCRGEA is committed, more than ever, to serving you well. Having served on

our Board for more than six years, I can confidently assure that you are being served by a dedicated group of professionals, in the office, on the road, and at the legislature. Our staff, who provide direct services, and our government relations team, who advocate on our behalf, remain committed to making your quality of life better.

You will find in Executive Director Richard Rogers' message a brief summary of our initiatives for the next fiscal year. Here's to better days ahead. Stay safe and well.

Vann Langston
NCRGEA President

Thanks to our Past President Linda Suggs

The Board of Directors of the NCRGEA would like to share its gratitude for the leadership and dedication of our 2019-2020 Board President Linda Suggs. Linda provided tireless, steady leadership through both good and bad times.

We thank you Linda and look forward to hearing about the great things you have yet to accomplish but undoubtedly will.

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Living Power is published to provide current information for NCRGEA's membership. Newsletters are printed bimonthly and mailed to all members of NCRGEA. Your comments are welcome.

Editor: Richard E. Rogers, Jr.
Managing Editor: Donna K. Riggs

For address changes, suggestions or comments, please contact:
NCRGEA • 528 Wade Avenue • Raleigh, NC 27605
919.834.4652 • 1.800.356.1190 • www.ncrgea.com

To receive **Living Power** newsletter electronically, please send an email to info@ncrgea.com and include your full name and the city where you live.

2020-Changes, Challenges & Opportunities

On the eve of 2020 and during the first two months of the new year, NCRGEA was making the case to local and state leaders that it was imperative to provide a COLA for government retirees. With the stock market setting new records monthly and the North Carolina pension plan having gains of more than 14.5% in 2019, it looked like a year that retirees would get a much-needed cost of living adjustment.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the economy and our entire social network. More recently social injustice has become another lightning rod topic and has required government to focus on delivering the basic needs of our democratic society. Now, our local and state leaders are looking at a five billion-dollar short fall in tax revenues, an unemployment rate nearing 20% and social turmoil that has not been seen in 50 years.

Legislatively, we are now focused on ensuring the pension system and state health plan are funded so they can continue uninterrupted service while maintaining your well-funded pension and providing quality state retiree health care.

At the start of 2020, NCRGEA was looking forward to engaging our membership in their communities by organizing local retiree groups to engage local and state leaders at home and to support retiree activities in communities across the state. Obviously, our efforts have been put on hold due the social distancing requirements as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic has upset our normal routines in so many ways but it has also mainstreamed the use of virtual meetings such as webinars and ZOOM conferencing. Out of necessity the NCRGEA Board and its committees continued their work through virtual meetings. Having familiarized ourselves with these different types of meeting options, we now better understand how we can use video conferencing and webinars to effectively reach our members as well. In the near future we hope to provide you the opportunity to join us for video conferences on a number of topics that may include: The State Health Plan, candidate forums and member benefits, as well as NCRGEA updates.

With our 2020-2021 Board of Directors and Vann Langston as President, our Association will

work to establish footholds in communities across the state, expand our traditional and new methods of member outreach and continue to be a valued resource for local and state government retirees.

Board of Directors Changes

Each year in June, the NCRGEA Board of Directors elects new members as Board member terms expire. NCRGEA has been privileged through the years with the dedication and extraordinary service of many, many Board members.

Our thanks to the following Board members whose terms ended in 2020 for their untiring efforts in leading NCRGEA.

Clifton Metcalf, Lake Junaluska, District 1
Charles Beck, Lenoir, District 2
Linda Story, Granite Falls, District 2
Irene Pollard, Farmville, District 5

While we are sad to lose these great Board members and are grateful for their service; we look forward to welcoming new Board members to the NCRGEA leadership team who will continue in these large footsteps of all who served before.

Welcome to the NCRGEA Board of Directors

George W. "Chuck" Wooten of Sylva, District 1
Cecil E. Wood, Wilkesboro, District 2
J. Thomas "Tom" Lundy, District 2
Karl E. Sanders, Rocky Mount, District 5

2020-21 NCRGEA Officers

V. Vann Langston, Raleigh, President
Martha Sue Hall, Albemarle, Vice President
Michael Taylor, Emerald Isle, Secretary/Treasurer

Retiree Pay Dates

(Dates pension checks are direct deposited or checks are mailed.)

Be sure to keep the NC Retirement Systems informed of your current mailing address. Call 877-627-3287 for all questions about your retirement check or deductions.

July 24, 2020	October 23, 2020
August 25, 2020	November 25, 2020
September 25, 2020	December 23, 2020

COVID 19 UPDATE – Getting Ready to Travel!

Thank you NCRGEA friends and family! We have heard from many of you who are anxiously awaiting to embark on your next travel experience – and believe me, we want that too! Serving you is what keeps us going!

We know that some of you may have ongoing reservations about the current travel landscape. Please be assured that as our industry regains its footing, we will be able to provide you with all the current policies, procedures, and precautions that have been implemented for your safety.

Whether it's group travel, a bucket list trip, romantic getaway, family vacation or personal pilgrimage after all that 'together time,' we value being a part of your vision.

It is our pleasure to be your trusted travel advisor, so please reach out – we want to hear from you!

This is the time to DREAM & PLAN for 2021, please send us your wish list and continue to stay safe and healthy, we will get through this together!

Karen Britt
Britt Travel Group (Carolina Cruise Tours)
919-889-4900 • kbritt@dreamvacations.com

2020 TRIPS & TOURS

The following tours have been planned. We will travel via luxury motorcoach. We need at least 35 to make each trip. We will be sure that we monitor all locations and implement safety measures so everyone will have a wonderful experience.

MUSIC, RAILROADS and MUCH MORE! – RESCHEDULED TO AUGUST 13-16. Elkins is a quaint town located in the heart of West Virginia's Mountain Highlands. On this tour you'll experience 3 musical performances at two different playhouses (Gandy Dancer & Wohlfahrt Haus). Enjoy an afternoon train ride, a visit to the Greenbank Radio Observatory and a stroll through the town of Mayberry (Mt. Airy). Meals are included! **\$779 pp (double occupancy).** *The show at the Wohlfahrt Haus theatre is Motown Classic.

NEW ENGLAND, MAINE & VERMONT – RESCHEDULED TO SEPTEMBER 12-19. Join us as we travel north via deluxe motorcoach from Raleigh (Charlotte and neighboring areas we can offer pre night stay so you can join us). See the very best of New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont! One day to travel up/back, we will stay 5 consecutive nights in the same hotel while touring. Includes most meals and entertainment. **\$1799 (double occupancy).**

NIAGARA FALLS GETAWAY – RESCHEDULED TO OCTOBER 5-9. Featuring National Marine Corps Museum, Corning Glass Museum and a cruise on the Erie canal. Enjoy 5 days 4 nights as we travel north to Niagara Falls. See the spectacular falls, visit Niagara on the Lake, Flower Clock and a chocolate factory. You'll enjoy the "Oh Canada Eh" dinner show, a wonderful performance that takes you on a musical journey from province to province, with Canadian music from maritime folk songs to modern pop. If you enjoy fun, learning something new, great company and food, this tour is for you! **PASSPORT REQUIRED.** Includes transportation, hotels, 10 meals (4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 4 dinners), evening show, canal cruise, and all admissions. **\$959 pp (double occupancy).**



To our Valued Clients:

We want to open the door to the world and all that it has to offer; to be able to give our clients the very best travel opportunities and the best rates in the travel industry. Therefore, all of us here at Carolina Cruise & Tours are so excited to announce that we have partnered with Dream Vacations and will officially be operating under the Britt Travel Group. Contact us for the very best deals on cruises, tours and more!



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www.bookwithbritt.com



Amplifon Earns NCQA Accreditation for Credentialing

Amplifon Hearing Health Care has earned accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for the credentialing and recredentialing of hearing health care providers in the Amplifon network. This accredited status is effective May 8, 2020, through May 8, 2023.

Achieving NCQA Credentialing Accreditation demonstrates Amplifon has the systems, process and personnel in place to conduct credentialing in accordance with the strictest quality standards, ultimately supporting optimal hearing health care for patients who are served by providers in the Amplifon network.

In awarding its Credentialing Accreditation, NCQA conducted a rigorous review process of Amplifon that focused on several key areas, including internal quality improvement, appropriateness of agreements and collaboration with clients, peer review process, credential verification and monitoring of sanctions and complaints.

“Amplifon health insurance partners count

on us to ensure the highest standards of care for their members,” says Marc C. Lundeberg, Executive Vice President, Amplifon Americas. “Credentialing Accreditation by NCQA provides an exceptionally strong indicator of our commitment to this goal.” Earning NCQA Credentialing Accreditation is one of many initiatives underway at Amplifon, according to Tabatha Erck, EdD, MPA, Senior Vice President, Amplifon Hearing Health Care. “This is just one highlight on our path to offering a more comprehensive service model to manage the end-to-end delivery of hearing health care benefits for plans and their members.”

NCQA is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to assessing and reporting on the quality of managed care plans, managed behavioral health care organizations, preferred provider organizations, new health plans, physician organizations, credentials verification organizations, disease management programs and other health-related programs.

**Convenient Access –
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SECU
State Employees' Credit Union



COVID-19 is changing the way we do things. Contactless services are more important than ever! Through Member Access at www.ncsecu.org, State Employees' Credit Union (SECU) members can perform many of the same transactions and maintenance that can be conducted at your local branch. You can also view your account statements online by signing up for E-Statements!

Coming in October - Open Enrollment for NCRGEA Dental & Vision Plans

In October, NCRGEA will hold our annual Open Enrollment for dental, vision and legal services. As NCRGEA members, you will be able to enroll in our dental plan through Standard Insurance Company which uses the Ameritas network of providers and/or our vision plan through Superior Vision. We will also continue to offer Legal Shield and ID Shield products.

Open enrollment for 2021 will be from October 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020. We will mail enrollment booklets and letters to current members in September and provide all the details of the plans and the enrollment process. Remember, we will offer our current members and new members the opportunity to change from plans outside of our Association and join our group plans. You can refer to our website www.ncrgea.com for information on our current Standard Dental and Superior Vision plans.

If you leave home, know your Ws!



WEAR
a cloth face
covering.



WAIT
6 feet apart. Avoid
close contact.



WASH
your hands often or
use hand sanitizer.

@NCDHHS

#StayStrongNC



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Fall District Meetings – Heading West in September

It's that time again! Your NCRGEA staff and our terrific team of speakers and exhibitors will be on the road for our 2020 Fall District Meetings. District meetings are held across the state in three districts each year –in the spring and in the fall. In September, we will be in western North Carolina. Dues-paid members from each district will be invited to attend a district meeting near the county where they currently live. A member can choose to attend any one of the district meetings in the area. Members who live in other districts can also attend but must register in advance.

Sadly, due to the stay-at-home order, we had to postpone our Spring district meetings planned for District 6 (Charlotte, Gastonia and Concord) but we plan to reschedule them soon.

COVID19 IMPACT ON FALL MEETINGS: Due to the 2020 COVID19 virus, the following guidelines will be strictly followed. These are not only for your safety and health, but for everyone present.

- Every attendee must be wearing a mask to enter the meeting facility and continue to wear it during the meeting except when eating or drinking.
- Temperatures of each attendee will be checked. Anyone with a temperature over 100 degree will

not be allowed to stay.

- Masks must be worn at all times – this includes attendees, exhibitors and staff.
- There are no set breaks. You may use the rest-rooms as needed, keeping social distancing.
- Social distancing – please keep 6 feet from other people. Tables and chairs should not be moved.
- You may be required by to provide your full name, mailing address and phone number (in the event contacting you after the meeting becomes necessary).

Invitations will be mailed in late July. Members can register by returning their invitation by mail or registering online at www.ncrgea.com. Our tentative district meeting program is posted on the District Meetings page.

NOTE: In the event these meetings are postponed/cancelled because of continuing COVID-19 concerns after invitations have been mailed, we will send a postcard notice of the meeting cancellations. Our website will also post the latest information to help keep you informed.

Here are the dates and locations of our 2020 Fall district meetings! We look forward to seeing you!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Serving NCRGEA Members in These Counties</u>
Monday, Sept. 14, 2020	Wilkesboro - The Walter Center at Wilkes Community College 1328 Collegiate Drive	Ashe, Alleghany, Surry, Wilkes, Yadkin
Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020	Blowing Rock - Meadowbrook Inn 711 Main Street	Avery, Caldwell, Watauga, Mitchell and Yancey
Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020	Hickory - Hickory Metro Convention Center 1960 13 th Avenue Dr SE	Alexander, Burke, Catawba, Lincoln
Friday, Sept. 18, 2020	Statesville - Statesville Civic Center 300 South Center Street	Iredell, Rowan
Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020	Flat Rock - Blue Ridge Community College 180 West Campus Drive	Henderson, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania
Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020	Asheville - Crowne Plaza Resort One Resort Drive	Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, McDowell
Thursday, October 1, 2020	Cherokee - Harrah's Cherokee 777 Casino Drive	Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon



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Contact your Account Manager for more information.

Contact: Jessica Johnson
Phone: (240) 535-7519
Email: jessica.johnson@officedepot.com

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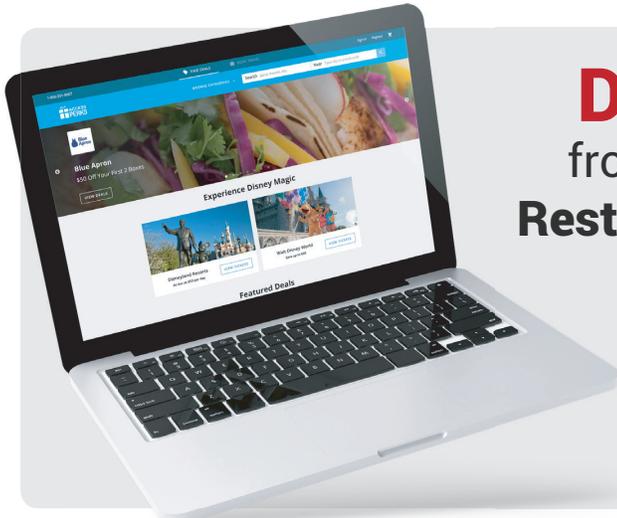
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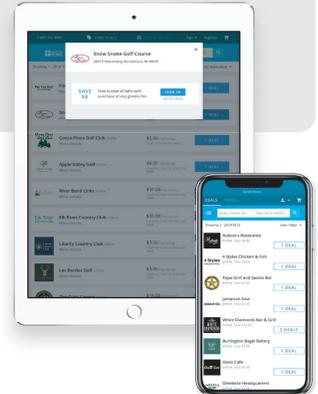
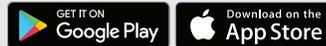
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ACCESS PERKS **FREE PROGRAM**

Coupons are available but the vendor base and discounts will be less than the Premium Access Perks.

- 1 Go to: ncrgeafree.accessperks.com
- 2 Click on **SIGN UP** and enter registration code **RETIRED**; enter your name, email address, set up a password and click signup.

That is it! Once you hit enter, you will be returned to the screen where coupons and vendors are made available to you. If you want more choices and deeper discounts, upgrade to the Premium Access Perks.

ACCESS PERKS **PREMIUM PROGRAM**

Includes entertainment, travel, fitness, and other venues not included in the free program. You will also reap deeper discounts with the Premium Access Perks Program. **THIS PROGRAM COSTS \$18.00 PER YEAR**, and you can enroll by going to our website www.ncrgea.com, **select benefits, Access Perks Program, and then CLICK HERE TO ENROLL**. Or complete the form below, and mail to us with your payment. Once your enrollment is received, it will take approximately two days for your account to be live.

PREMIUM ACCESS PERKS ENROLLMENT

Prefer to mail payment: *(Please Print)*

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Mail check for \$18.00 payable to NCRGEA to 528 Wade Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27605
Enrollment questions, please contact NCRGEA at 800-356-1190



**SAVE WITH PROVIDERS
LIKE THESE AND MORE!**



COVID 19 Fraud Alert

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General is alerting the public about fraud schemes related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Scammers are offering COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information. **However, the services are unapproved and illegitimate.**

Fraudsters are targeting beneficiaries in a number of ways, including telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits. These scammers use the coronavirus pandemic to benefit themselves, and beneficiaries face potential harms. The personal information collected can be used to fraudulently bill Federal health care programs and commit medical identity theft. If Medicare or Medicaid denies the claim for an unapproved test, the beneficiary could be responsible for the cost.

Protect Yourself

- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for their Medicare or Medicaid numbers.
- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.
- Do not respond to, or open hyperlinks in, text messages about COVID-19 from unknown individuals.
- Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites.
- A physician or other trusted healthcare provider should assess your condition and approve any requests for COVID-19 testing.

If you suspect COVID-19 fraud, contact National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline (866) 720-5721 or [Justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm](https://www.justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm)

Source: www.justice.gov

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We are always striving to improve the ways we communicate with you, our members! Over the past three months with everyone “stuck at home”, we have relied more than ever on electronic communications. So please take a few minutes and check out our website: www.ncrgea.com.

Sign up to receive NCRGEA Legislative Updates by email! NCRGEA members can get a weekly update on the status or progress of legislation that impacts retirees.

On our website you can sign up to receive our

email and newsletter. Sometimes we send a “Take Action Now!” alert with information and ask you to contact your legislators. Over the past couple months we have emailed important information and links about the COVID-19 with tips to help you stay safe and details about which Phase our state is observing and what it means to you.

Go to: WWW.NCRGEA.COM - click on: **Sign-up to Receive NCRGEA Communications Electronically!** You can also sign up to receive our email communications or our *Living Power* newsletter.

Member Spouses: Be an Associate Member!

The spouse of any dues-paid active member can join NCRGEA as an “Associate Member” for only \$40 a year. Associate Members can access all full member benefits of our Association and also be covered by our \$10,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment benefit.

With your spouse as an Associate Member, you can also save on your monthly dental and vision premiums. For example: The monthly dental premium for Member and Spouse is \$107.48 – that’s \$1,289.76 a year. With your spouse joining as an Associate Member for \$40 a year, your

monthly dental premium drops to \$95.52 a month or \$1,146.24. That’s a savings of \$103.52 (after Associate Member dues of \$40 are paid.) Spouses can enroll as an Associate Member at any time and your dental and vision premiums will be reduced.

The Superior Vision monthly premium for Member and Family is \$15.88 and Member and Associate monthly premium is \$13.98.

You can download an Associate Membership application from our website www.ncrgea.com; email a request to info@ncrgea.com; or call our office to have one mailed 1-800-356-1190.

NCBAM Hope Line Available for NC Senior Adults

The HOPE LINE (**866.578.4673**) of NC Baptist Aging Ministry is available daily 9:00am – 9:00pm to receive calls from NC senior adults who are experiencing isolation and loneliness—because of social distancing efforts or for any other reason.

NCBAM team members and volunteers trained in evidence-based health coach techniques focus on listening and allowing callers to have a safe space to express themselves.

Knowing that many individuals in need of a friendly call service may not initiate a call, **the Hope Line also offers outbound calls.** The service is free and can be requested by calling 877.506.2226 or by emailing ncbam@bchfamily.org. A link will be sent to sign up for the “friendly

call” service.

Call recipients must be 65 or older and live in North Carolina. Requests can be made by individuals themselves or by a family member or caregiver.



**65+? Lonely?
Need to talk?**
NCBAM's Hope Line
is here for you!
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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

Weekly Legislative Updates

NCRGEA members can get a weekly update on the status or progress of legislation that impacts retirees. You can sign up to receive NCRGEA Legislative Updates by email!

- Go to www.ncrgea.com.
- Click on: **Sign-up to Receive NCRGEA Communications Electronically!**

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

NCRGEA	1-800-356-1190
In Raleigh Area	919-834-4652
The Standard	1-800-547-9515
Superior Vision	1-800-507-3800
NC Retirement Systems.....	1-877-627-3287
Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program ...	1-855-408-1212
In Raleigh Area	919-807-6900
NC State Health Plan	1-919-814-4400
Blue Cross/Blue Shield.....	1-888-234-2416
Amplifon Hearing Health Program	1-877-806-7054
United Healthcare	1-866-747-1014
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213
State Employees' Credit Union	1-888-732-8562
Local Government Federal Credit Union	1-800-344-4846
NC Total Retirement Plans 401K/457 Plans.....	1-866-627-5267
Carolina Cruise and Tours.....	919-889-4900



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