

Year 2000



574 Days



ORS Look Out

June 5, 1998

Volume 1, Issue 22

Did you know . . . ?

... ORS works closely with the Michigan Attorney General's office. ORS receives legal advice and representation from several Assistant Attorneys General (AGs). Those attorneys specializing in retirement issues include Dave Balas, the Assistant in Charge of the Retirement Division, Kevin Thom and Julia Bell.

What do the Assistant AGs do

for ORS? The attorneys help with drafts of new legislation or amendments to current statutes.

The AGs, along with ORS Director Chris DeRose and the State Treasurer, are also required to review amendments to county pension plans under the County Pension Act.

However, one of the primary roles for the Assistant AGs is to give legal representation for the systems within ORS.

Why would ORS need an attorney? When parts of the retirement statutes are challenged or questioned the

Assistant AGs assist by giving us advice and direction on how to handle a specific case or situation.

They may research previous case decisions which are similar to our circumstances and use those decisions to reinforce their position.

The Assistant AGs also represent ORS in Administrative



Hearings and Appellate Court cases. Administrative Hearings are used to resolve disputes between retirement system members and the retirement systems. If a member feels he or she is entitled to a particular benefit or eligible for something the retirement system's statutes don't allow, that member has the right to make appeals up through the levels of management. If the situation is still not settled to the member's satisfaction, he or she can request an Administrative Hearing.

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Social Security numbers are confidential!

Everyone's Social Security numbers are protected under Federal law and cannot be given out to anyone without permission from the individual. Unlawful disclosure of a Social Security number is a federal crime and is punishable by up to a \$5,000 fine or five years in prison, or both!

Because most of us in the office use Social Security numbers to identify our active and retiree customers when working with employers and health care providers, we must be extra careful not to release these numbers to anyone, including outside organizations, associations or any other groups. It is very important for all staff to protect the confidentiality of our members' Social Security numbers.

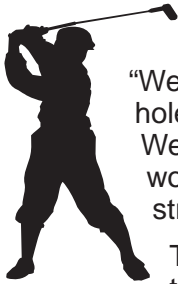
Thought for the Day

You will never stub your toe standing still. The faster you go, the more chance there is of stubbing your toe, but the more chance you have of getting somewhere.

- Charles F. Kettering

ORS golfers take to the links

ORS has its own golf league comprised of seven pairs from ORS and related organizations. Dubbed the "DMB Duffers," the league has been around for quite a few years.



Fred Covert, current coordinator, explains how the league works. "We use two-person teams with a 9-hole scramble (handicapped) format. We play Tuesday evenings (after work) at the Players Club, just up the street on Canal."

This year's league members (by team) are:

- Fred Covert & wife Julie
- Judy & Tom Therrian (Julie Covert's parents)
- Marianna DeBolt & husband John
- Bill Motz & son Steve
- Chuck Simpson & wife Linda
- Nancy Quick & sister Phyllis Rulison
- Tom Dimmer (Delta Dental) & Jeff Ellsworth

When asked if there is any room for additional players, Fred commented: "We have been playing for three weeks, so it's a bit late to join this year. However, substitutes can play if someone is absent, although we don't use the subs' scores in the final team tally. In addition, we anticipate having a league again next year."

If anyone is interested in participating as a sub this year, or in the league next year, contact Fred Covert at 2-6026.

There will probably be another opportunity for ORS staff to get out those clubs to hit the links. The DMB Duffers usually combines its banquet with an annual ORS golf outing event in early to mid-September. Everyone is invited to join the outing (probably an open scramble), which normally includes 18 holes of golf with a cart, dinner and prizes. Further details on this will be released later this summer.

New column added

Sharing information is an important function of the *LookOut*. Several respondents to our *LookOut* reader survey said they would like to know more about different areas within ORS – what type of work is done within the division; the kinds of questions staff get asked; special projects or goals the division is working on; and so on.

The *LookOut*'s new column, "Did you know . . . ?", will take some of these questions and explain what we do, like the EDRO article in the last issue.

Do you have a suggestion for a future column? Is there something you wish you knew more about or think should be shared with other staff? Send your questions, ideas and suggestions to Rosemary Baker and Matt Beha. Maybe they'll be part of an upcoming column!

SERS tracking system Y2K compliant

Final testing has been completed and the SERS tracking system met its Y2K requirements in May.



All previous entries and every new entry to the system now displays a four-digit year.

You can use slashes or dashes between the month, date and year when entering data. The month and date fields continue to accept a single digit entry (no need to use a "0" before the digit).

In the year field, you can enter either a two- or a four-digit year. If the two-digit entry is between 0 and 50, the century automatically defaults to 20. If the two-digit entry is between 51 and 99, it defaults to 19.

Congratulations to **Diane Wagner** from ASD and **Tom Braun** from ORS for their efforts on this Y2K project. It's a great accomplishment, and puts us another step closer to our Y2K deadline.



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AGs assist ORS

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In an Administrative Hearing, the member (the Petitioner) can represent him- or herself or use an attorney. The retirement system involved in the dispute (the Respondent) is represented by one of the Assistant AGs. If the dispute is about how the retirement act should be interpreted, the Petitioner and the Respondent can prepare legal documents in support of their positions (briefs) and submit them to an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). The ALJ reviews the documents and prepares a recommendation, called a Proposal for Decision or PFD.

If the dispute concerns facts and opinions, the Petitioner and the Respondent present their cases verbally in front of the Adminis-

trative Law Judge. Although the hearing is more informal than a typical court case you might envision, it has many similarities. People testify and the attorneys can cross-examine the witnesses. Materials can be submitted and marked as evidence to be reviewed later by the ALJ. A court reporter records every word of testimony and prepares a transcript of the hearing for all parties involved. After the hearing, the ALJ reviews the transcript and the evidence and prepares a Proposal for Decision (PFD).

Both sides have an opportunity to respond to the PFD with "rebuttals" which can agree and/or disagree with what the ALJ has said. Depending on the case, the ALJ's decision may support management's actions

leading up to the hearing, or may support the Petitioner's position. However, the ALJ's decision is not final. The retirement system's Board reviews transcripts, the PFD and rebuttals, then decides whether to accept the ALJ's recommendation. Depending on the Board's decision, the Petitioner's request is either granted or denied.

If the retirement system or the Petitioner is not satisfied with this decision, either can file an appeal with the Circuit Court. If the Circuit Court's decision is not acceptable, either of the parties can request a review of the case by the Court of Appeals. In each of these stages, the Assistant AGs continue to represent ORS's interests in these hearings and appeals.

Comings and goings

The Customer Information Center welcomed five new staff members to its ranks June 1st. Joining CIC on a permanent basis are **Cheryl Moore** and **Kathryn Stehle**. Three more employees, **Fred Kracker**, **Beth Mosko** and **Kevin Polhamus**, all from Accountemps, will be with CIC on a temporary basis through this fall while CIC Team Leader Trish Walker Webb seeks three additional employees to round out the CIC staff.

Fred Kracker already has some familiarity dealing with retirement issues, having worked for the Municipal Employees Retirement System for seven months.



Fred Kracker

Cheryl Moore is a newcomer to ORS. She previously worked for the Department of Community Health.



Cheryl Moore



Beth Mosko

Kevin Polhamus' previous experience includes working in the accounting department of Consumers Power Credit Union.



Kevin Polhamus

Kathryn Stehle worked in the Attorney General's Office and for the Prosecuting Attorneys Coordinating Council.



Kathryn Stehle



Michelle Clark joined the Customer Service Division on June 1 as a Communications student assistant. Michelle

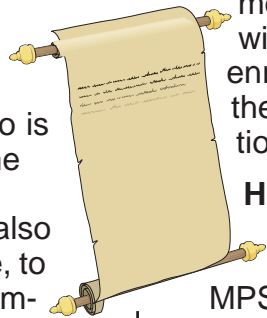
Michelle Clark is studying journalism and interior design at Michigan State University.

Jeff Ellsworth left ORS last Friday, May 29 to take a promotion with the Customer Service Division, Medical Services Administration in the Department of Community Health.

Legislative Update

Several legislative bills affecting ORS have recently passed the House and the Senate and are awaiting the Governor's signature.

HB 4943 allows an employee of a Michigan public school who is working in a part-time seasonal or athletic position, and who is also under 19 years of age, to be excluded from membership in Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS). In addition, a MPERS member employed by a Michigan public school between January 1, 1987 and January 1, 1990 who had one year or less of service credit during that period, and who did not elect the Member



Investment Plan (MIP) may be able to enroll in MIP. If the IRS approves of this provision, about 200 MPERS

members would have a window of time to enroll in MIP by making the required contributions.

HB 4897 provides a 75% survivor option at retirement for MPERS members in addition to the current 50% and 100% survivor options. This new option is scheduled to go into effect in 2000. A similar bill has been introduced for the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) which includes a Universal Buy-In service credit provision, too. At last report, the SERS version was still in the Senate.

We need your feedback!

Earlier this year, you started completing a yellow *Customer Follow-Up Survey* form each week identifying an internal or external customer you served. Then each week you were to take a form completed by a fellow employee and call that customer to find out their opinions of the customer service they received from ORS staff.

To help determine the effectiveness of this process, we would like your feedback. Please use the form enclosed in this issue of the *LookOut* to give us some of your thoughts about your experience with the *Customer Follow-Up Surveys*. Please place your forms in the wire basket above the Customer Service mailboxes by CIC. We appreciate your assistance.

Now for a really big Shoe!

Is your tongue hanging out in anticipation of this issue's Scramble? We'd be real heels if we were to lace this exercise with excessive puns when its sole purpose is to get you to think about reengineering. So, don't be a loafer! Solving this Scramble will be no easy feat. Then shoes a co-worker and discuss the meaning and how it applies to your work. The answer might be the first step toward some ideas for doing your job a little smarter while providing better customer service. Here it is, so be on your toes:

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 snadt latl ni
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As always, the unscrambled posters will be on display next week on first and third floors of ORS. And this is the last pun in this week's Scramble.

