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**Message from the Director**

*Phil Stoddard talks about the importance of employer-sponsored retirement plans.*

In the world of retirement, there are the *haves* and the *have-nots* - workers who have an employer-sponsored retirement plan and those who don't. In fact, there are more American workers today without an employer-sponsored plan than those who do have one.

At ORS, most of us spend our time dealing with the *haves*. But you should know we're also rooting for the *have-nots*. The past several years we've seen a growing trend in our country, where employers are reducing or ceasing retirement plan offerings.

We set an example by offering sound retirement plans that not only benefit workers, but employers and communities too. We also try to spread the word that providing good benefits improves the current and future wellbeing of our citizens; help employers attract, retain, and reward good employees; and support and strengthen economies.



Phil Stoddard, Director

Increasingly I am being called before legislators, stakeholders, and advocacy groups to explain the importance of offering retirement benefits and how those benefits work. In the last year alone we had the highest number ever of retirement related bills that could affect our members. We research those bills, make sure our lawmakers have a sound understanding of the obvious and hidden impacts of retirement plans, and advocate for continuing to provide the best possible plans for our members.

I want to thank all of you for the daily support you provide me. I also thank Benefit Plan Design staff for extracting information and working closely with me to help educate those who influence the future of our retirement benefits.

**Calendar**

**February**

President's Day	18
Governor's Service Awards Nomination Deadline	19
Leap Year Day	29

**March**

State Employees Board Meeting	6
Public School Employees Board Meeting	13
St. Patrick's Day	17
First Day of Spring	20

**On the Horizon**



*Sounding Out is a way for ORS staff to share ideas, viewpoints, gripes, praises, and concerns. Email your opinion (300 words or less, if possible) to [ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov](mailto:ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov). Here David Travis speaks out about his personal experience and the importance of Black History Month.*

- Deadline for ORS Excellence Awards Nominations March 3, 2008

The month of February is Black History Month. It's a month where all Americans appreciate the African American remembrance of its important people and the events in history.

**Quick Links**

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)
- [Knowledge Library](#)

During my short life span, I had the opportunity to meet many famous sports celebrities (Reggie Jackson and Earvin "Magic" Johnson), political leaders (Rev. Jesse Jackson and Senator Hillary Clinton), and movie stars (Cuba Gooding Jr. and Wesley Snipes) who have really shaped and enlightened my life.

However, there is one person I will never forget. She came to my aide when I needed help during my darkest hour. I will never forget Mrs. Dorothy Miller.

**Commonly Used Acronyms**

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly ( <i>EPC, BPOs, and BPLs</i> )
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader
BPO	Business Process Owner
CE	Customer Education
CSC	Customer Service Center
DB	Defined Benefits
DC	Defined Contributions
DIT	Department of Information Technology
DMB	Department of Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council ( <i>Phil, Laurie, Tim, Anthony, and Kathy</i> )
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting ( <i>public school employees</i> )
PRO	Preretirement Orientation ( <i>state employees</i> )
PS	Process Support
SME	Subject Matter Expert

Mrs. Miller was an elderly, widowed Caucasian woman. I met her many years ago while attending Wiley College (Wiley is located in East Texas near the Louisiana state border). Mrs. Miller was the wife and daughter of a former Ku Klux Klansmen.

I met Mrs. Miller while working part-time at the Marshall News Messenger as a photographer and reporter. On an August night, I was traveling back to campus after watching a high school football game when my automobile had a flat tire. I didn't have a spare to replace my flat so I flagged down a car for help. It was Mrs. Miller who kindly helped me contact a local garage to tow my car for repairs.

Mrs. Miller then drove me toward campus. Before we could reach the college, we were stopped by law officers. Apparently, they were looking for a large black male who had beaten and raped several Caucasian women in the vicinity that evening.

I fit the description and was pulled forcibly out of the automobile. By the time I reached the jail, I was beaten unconscious.

I awoke inside a jail cell with nothing on, lying on a filthy mattress. I could barely see, because my eyes were swollen almost completely shut. My ribs were sore and I had trouble breathing. I couldn't speak. I was tasting and choking on my own blood.

I was in serious trouble. I feared the worst was yet to come. I had lost hope.

Mrs. Miller appeared at the jail. She explained to my jailers that I wasn't the suspect they were looking for. She supported my alibi, confirming that I was at the football game earlier. Mrs. Miller was also at the game and she saw me taking pictures and sitting in the press box.

I was released. I went to the hospital for treatment. Mrs. Miller contacted my professors and employer about my absence, but never told them why I was not available.

I never saw Mrs. Miller again after that horrible evening.

I had heard she passed away six years ago. Before her death, she sent me a letter in 1995, apologizing for the way the officers had treated me. She wrote that the color of my skin would lead me to successes and failures in my life. Mrs. Miller further stated in the letter that she had a dream about me and that one day I would have a title attached to my name with the letters EUC.

I have never told anyone this story before. I truly feared for my life. I thought I was going to die. Mrs. Miller came to my aide and I will never forget what was done for me.



**Your Employee ID – Keep it with you**

STG	Systems Technology Group (Web self-service contract vendor)
T&T	Tools and Technology
UAT	User Acceptance Testing

It is very important that you have your employee ID on you at all times to ensure security and safety for those working in this building. The IDs are required for entrance into the building, either by the security guard, or by scanning your ID over the Proximity Card Readers. They are also required for entrance into the interior doors before 6:00 a.m. and after 6:00 p.m.

### Retiree survey coming soon

Four hundred randomly selected retirees from all four retirement system will receive the annual retiree survey in the next two weeks. The survey is used to obtain general input from our retiree's on how well ORS is serving their needs and is scheduled to conclude mid-March.

### Cobra Premium Insurance Due coupons issued

Just under 400 Cobra Premium Insurance Due (COBRA pays-us) letters were mailed Tuesday, February 12. The letters told the COBRA participants the annual and monthly amounts due. Monthly coupons accompanied the letters.

### Annual Disability Certification mailed

Approximately 4,500 Annual Disability Certifications for public school and state employee's retirement systems were mailed on Friday, February 8. Each year certification letters are sent to retirees to determine if their pension amount needs to be reduced based on earnings received the previous calendar year. It also certifies that the recipient remains disabled and ensures that ORS knows whether they are on Medicare which could reduce their insurance premium.

A similar mailing will be sent to state police in the next few weeks.

### PA 110 & 111 presentation online

A short PowerPoint presentation with voice-over can be found under What's New on the employer website ([www.michigan.gov/psru](http://www.michigan.gov/psru)). The presentation, recorded by BPD's **Kerrie Vanden Bosch** and developed by CE's **Robert Glennon** and **Ray Fleming**, explains the provisions of Public Act 110 and 111, legislation passed last fall for public school members. The presentation addresses question employers might have, and is not intended for members. Click here to see the presentation (you will need sound to hear the presentation):

[http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/OnlinePresentations/PA\\_110-111\\_of\\_2007/PA\\_110-111\\_2007.html](http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/OnlinePresentations/PA_110-111_of_2007/PA_110-111_2007.html)

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## Online tool aids PRIM postponements

Winter weather has taken a toll on our PRIMs this season causing the postponement of two sessions, one at Ottawa ISD in January and another in Charlotte this past week.

Thanks to the new online registration process, CE was able to quickly send email postponement notices to nearly all of the enrollees (only a few customers did not provide an email address), thereby reducing phone calls to and from ORS staff. In addition, they were able to quickly reschedule both meetings, place all the previously registered customers into the new sessions, and notify them of the update via email.

Way to go, team!

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## Comings & Goings

**Lynn Barnes** joined CSC in the insurance section on January 14. Lynn, a recent empty-nester, enjoys having her own time for music,

friends, and learning. She commented that “my grandmother is alive and sparkling at 103,” and she plans to learn how to blow glass and sail small craft, and maybe enjoy some grandchildren.



Lynn Barnes



Crystal Newsome



Carlos Ruiz

Welcome to **Crystal Newsome** who joined ER on January 30. Crystal spent most of her life in the Springport and Eaton Rapids area until recently moving to Lansing to pursue employment. She enjoys spending time with her family and loves to bake.

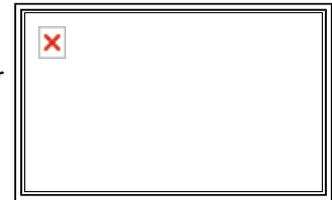
On January 28 **Carlos Ruiz** began working for Laurie Hill and assisting with Blue Cross Blue Shield records. Carlos is originally from Lansing and has worked for the state of Michigan in the past. He is currently finishing courses to obtain a degree in database management, and hopes to find a position where he can utilize his skills.

CSC staff wishes the best to **Shanna Hoss** who accepted a permanent position with The Rehmann Group in their annuity department. Today is her last day. Congratulations, Shanna! In addition, CSC bid farewell to **Travis Ricks** on February 8. Travis returned to the newspaper he previously worked for in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

## What's happening across DMB

### Lunch with DMB leadership

Join director Lisa Webb Sharpe and Deputy Director Rose Wilson for a brownbag lunch at the General Office Building on Tuesday, February 19 from 12:00 to 12:30 or 12:30 to 1:00. Sign up for one of the sessions on the DMB intranet, <http://connect.michigan.gov/portal/site/dmb/index.jsp>. Other locations and times are available.

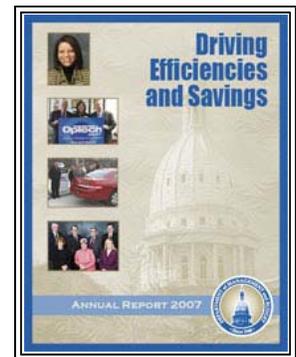


Lisa and Rose plan to talk about the following:

- Update on current budget.
- DMB's priorities and FY 2009 budget proposal.
- Audit, Financial Services, and HR consolidations.
- Open forum.

### DMB – Driving Efficiencies and Savings

The title of this year's [annual report](#) says it all. Visit DMB's homepage to check out the successes of all 826 DMB employees and discover the ORS milestones and those of our fellow DMB colleagues.



**DMB Mission:**  
Partners in achieving excellence

**ORS Purpose:**  
We are an innovative retirement organization driven to empower our customers for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

The *LookOut* is published by the

## Surplus supplies cluttering your space?

Have you ever looked around your cubicle and noticed items you don't even use? Perhaps a calculator that ran out of paper a year ago, or a three-ring binder you got when you were first hired but haven't opened since? You can put items back to good use by passing them on to our PS supply staff in the mailroom.

“ORS does not have an official policy for dealing with surplus supplies,” said **Pam Ward**. “However, we do encourage you to recycle items so that someone else can get good use out of them.”

Office of Retirement  
Services,  
Department of Management  
and Budget, State of  
Michigan

Director:  
Phil Stoddard  
Edited by Customer  
Education



Take a few minutes to identify excess or non-used office supplies, such as staples, binders, calculators, etc. Make sure the items are clean and drop them off in the supply room where they will be stored for later use.

Larger surplus items, such as chairs and tables which are no longer needed, should be brought to Pam Ward's attention. Pam will determine if repair is needed, or, if the item is beyond repair, it will be sent to the state surplus program.

Please remember, if you need supplies (new or reused) email PS staff at [ORS-Supplies@michigan.gov](mailto:ORS-Supplies@michigan.gov). Do not pirate vacant cubicles: taking telephone headsets, label makers, and so forth will cause difficulty with accurate inventory.

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## Slavery to Freedom: An American Odyssey

The Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine presents the [eighth annual visiting faculty lecture series](#) to be held on Thursdays, February 7 through 28, 2008. The award-winning series highlights persons who have become icons of the American struggle for civil rights. This year they honor the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's death.

All presentations will be on Thursdays at 5:00 p.m. at the Kellogg Center and are free of charge. No reservations are needed.

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**Note:** Because some of the links in this newsletter point to network resources, some of the links may not work if you are reading this outside of the organization.