



An Office of Retirement Services Publication

# Connections

October 2003, Vol. 6 No. 2

## Our Mission

We deliver pensions, related benefits and services to promote the future financial security of our customers.

## Our Vision

Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service.

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## ORS does its part in budget crunch

The Office of Retirement Services (ORS) is finding opportunities where staff can change our behavior to save money and help offset the state's budget shortage. With the state facing a projected budget deficit of \$1.7 billion, the governor and legislature have had to make some difficult choices regarding where to make cuts. One thing that is *not* affected by budget cuts is your pension.

At ORS, some of our efforts are big and some not so big, but every penny counts!

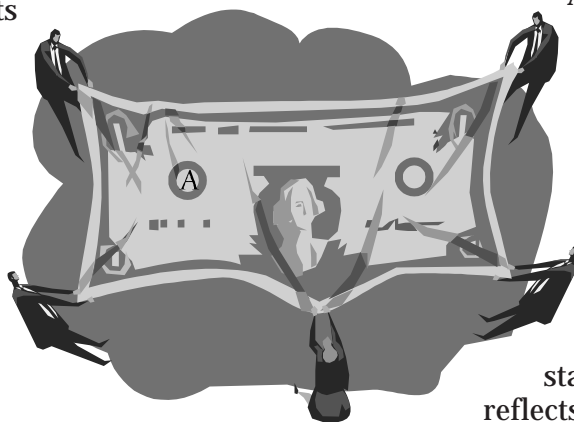
- We are inspecting every aspect of our business to add efficiency and streamline processes. We're determined to improve our service despite a tough budget.
- This newsletter, *Connections* is printed in black only. We're reducing other print costs by deciding if it can wait, if it can be delivered electronically, and if we can save on paper or ink in other ways. For example, with our EFT statements, we found that by fitting all of the information on a single side of the paper, rather than having to print on both sides, saves \$40,000 each year.
- Signs around the office remind us to turn lights, computers, and printers off as we leave. Even the restrooms are affected. They are no longer stocked with paper towels—the cost savings from using hand dryers have been estimated at over \$300 a month!

In addition, Mitch Irwin, Director of the Department of Management and Budget, of which ORS is a part, has helped state government reduce expenditures by an additional \$100 million through everything from reducing the number of state cars to turning off the power in state buildings at night.

At the state level, Governor Granholm first sought to make cuts that did not reduce services. "The number one victim in this budget is waste and inefficiency," she stated. "This budget reflects well over \$200 million in administrative cost reductions—cuts that reduce the cost of government without reducing services."

You can help! Having your pension delivered through electronic funds transfer (EFT) reduces check printing and postage costs. Checking the ORS website at [www.michigan.gov/ors](http://www.michigan.gov/ors) for answers or forms before you call reduces staffing costs.

We always welcome your suggestions for ways to serve you better. We'd also love to hear your cost-saving ideas. Send your comments to: *Connections* Editor, P.O. Box 30171, Lansing, MI 48909-7671. Better yet, e-mail us at [ORSCustomerService@michigan.gov](mailto:ORSCustomerService@michigan.gov)!



## From the Director

A topic currently on the minds of people in Michigan and across the nation is the state's budget situation. I want to reassure you that the state's budget situation will not affect your pension, since pension funds are held in a trust separate from the regular state budget. Certainly the state has fiscal challenges, but our governor and legislature have chosen to lead us through this challenge with a combination of financial choices that will position us for a bright future.

Will the budget affect ORS' service to you? Our vision of *Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service* is not altered by difficult financial times. Whatever situations arise, the ORS staff remains dedicated to using the resources we have in creative and innovative ways to provide you with quality service. Please see the related article in this issue of *Connections* about how ORS is adapting to the budget constraints.

This fall, all of ORS will participate in Governor Granholm's Vision and Values Initiative. This state-

wide initiative will help state employees create a government that shares beliefs in integrity, excellence, inclusion and teamwork. By coming together to share our values, state employees will connect what they care about to their organization's values. ORS has learned through experience that a shared vision, and shared values, has a direct and positive influence on customer service. Our staff looks forward to helping identify these guiding concepts for all of state government. The result will make state government a *great place to do great work* – for you and all customers of the state.

In closing, I extend a special thanks to each of you who has taken the time to respond to our surveys. These quarterly surveys play an important and continuing role in how we approach our daily business. Please keep your ideas coming; we appreciate hearing from you.



## Protect your identity from unauthorized users

Stories about identity theft – using another's name, social security number, credit card number or other piece of personal information fraudulently – are circulating in the news. Although identity theft is on the rise, the overall percentage of the population that encounters this type of fraud is still quite small.

While you don't need to be looking over your shoulder every time you purchase something with a credit card or conduct a financial transaction in public, it is wise to be more cautious about the personal information you provide to strangers. Following the suggestions below will help reduce the chance of this happening to you.

### ***Don't be a victim!***

The U.S. Department of Justice provides some basic steps you can take to help reduce the risk of having your identity stolen. These steps are easy to remember, using the letters from the word **SCAM**.

**S** Be **stingy** about giving your personal information to others unless you have a reason to trust them. Adopt a "need to know" approach to your personal data, *especially when other people call you*. If you have an on-going relationship with a bank, credit card

company or other financial institution, they should already have your personal information on file. Someone calling **you** to verify this type of information should raise a red flag.

When **you are the one making the call**, use your best judgment about what information to share. For example, when you call the Office of Retirement Services (ORS) to inquire about your account, we will ask for your name, social security number or other personal information. We use your responses to verify that you are who you say you are and protect your account from unauthorized inquiries. We are very careful to protect your privacy and will give out

*See Identity theft tips on page 4*

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# Michigan State Quarter ready for January release

What will be on the new Michigan quarter? The wait is over. Governor Granholm announced the final selection of Michigan's quarter design concept on October 1. The design features a crisp depiction of the state's distinctive outline, the Great Lakes, and the phrase, "Great Lakes State." This coin will be released by the Mint early next January as the 26<sup>th</sup> quarter in the Mint's 50 State Quarters Program.

The 50 State Quarters Program, started in 1999, releases a new quarter every 10 weeks. Quarters are released in the order that the state ratified the Constitution or joined the union. Each quarter's tails side celebrates that state's unique history, traditions, and symbols.

## The Great Lakes State

"The Great Lakes are an unmistakable part of who we are in Michigan," Governor Granholm said. "I'm proud to recommend a quarter that will showcase our unique connection to these treasures to the world."

Anyone from Michigan is fully aware of how the outline of our state is uniquely defined by the bordering shores of the Great Lakes. One of the members of the quarter commission, astronaut Jerry Linenger, summed it up well when he said, "From space, there is no other region on the globe so recognizable. Michigan is one of the defining features on the planet."

Focusing on our water resources and unique geography provides an opportunity to educate children and adults about how the Great Lakes has so strongly influenced our state, industries, and our livelihood. In the mid-17th century, the lure of furs and religious converts attracted French explorers to this area. The Great Lakes were important then as the only practical way to transport cargoes of fur great distances.

In later years, using the Great Lakes for transportation spurred various types of economic development in Michigan – from natural resource industries such as copper and iron mining and lumber, to agriculture, then to many different types of manufacturing

industries such as furniture, chemicals, stoves, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, cereal, refrigerators, steel, paper products, tires, and baby food.



Today the Great Lakes provide lots of vacationing opportunity for residents and tourists. Michigan, bounded by four of the five Great Lakes, has more miles of fresh-water shoreline than any other state in the nation. In addition, because of the massive length and irregular shape of our shoreline, Michigan has more light-houses – 120 – than either U.S. coast, and more than any other state. Our state is truly a great state to live in!

## The 2004 Michigan Quarter Timeline

### November 2001 to February 2002

- Governor Engler creates the 25-member Michigan Quarter Commission and Michigan residents submit over 4,3000 design concepts for the new state quarter.

### Early 2002 to Fall 2003

- The Commission reviews the design concepts and selects five final design themes.
- The five designs, with text descriptions, are submitted to the U.S. Mint.
- The U.S. Mint begins its review for appropriateness and coinability, producing drawings of Michigan's concepts. The drawings go through a series of reviews by the U.S. Citizens Commemorative Coin Advisory Committee, the U. S. Fine Arts Commission, and Secretary of the Treasury.
- The U.S. Mint completes its review process and the state receives approved designs for the governor's final selection.
- Governor Granholm announces the chosen design for Michigan's new quarter.

### January 2004

- Michigan's new coin is minted. It is officially released by the U.S. Mint on Michigan's Statehood Day, January 26, as the year's first new state quarter.

**Do you want to know more about the U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarters program?** Go to the Mint's web site at [www.usmint.gov/mint\\_programs](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs).

# Identity theft tips

Continued from page 2

account information **only to you**, unless you provide us with a Power of Attorney or other legal authorization to release information to someone else.

**C Check** your financial records regularly. Make sure your monthly or routine statements arrive as scheduled. If you don't receive one, contact the company immediately and ask about it. Review each of your statements to make sure there are no unauthorized debits or charges.

**A Ask** periodically for a copy of your credit report. Review it for accounts that someone else has opened or used in your name.

**M Maintain** careful financial records and keep them for at least a year. Quick access to these records will be helpful if you ever need to dispute a transaction.

## ***If you become a victim, act quickly.***

The Michigan Attorney General's office recommends these four steps for identity theft victims.

1. Report the theft to the fraud departments of each of the three major credit bureaus. Ask for a "fraud alert" to be placed on your file and for them to deny any new credit without your approval.
2. Close any accounts that have been fraudulently

### ***Pensions Issued***




November 25	February 25	May 25
December 18	March 25	June 25
January 23	April 23	July 23

If your EFT is not credited within three days of the above date, please call ORS. If your check is delayed, we can reissue it after the seventh of the following month.

### ***Holidays – Retirement Offices Closed***

November 11 - Veteran's Day  
November 27-28 - Thanksgiving  
December 24-25 - Christmas  
December 31 - New Year's Eve  
January 1 - New Year's Day  
January 19 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
February 16 - President's Day



accessed or opened, and put passwords on any new accounts. **Do not use your mother's maiden name or your social security number as your password.**

The three major credit bureaus are:

Equifax ([www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com))

Report Fraud: (800) 525-6285

Order Credit Report: (800) 685-1111

Experian ([www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com))

Report Fraud: (888) 397-3742

Order Credit Report: (888) 397-3742

Trans Union ([www.tuc.com](http://www.tuc.com))

Report Fraud: (800) 680-7289

Order Credit Report: (800) 888-4213

3. File a report with local police. Get the report number or a copy of the report for your files.

4. Call the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) ID Theft Clearinghouse at (877) ID-THEFT [(877) 438-4338]. The FTC's web site also has a wealth of information on identity theft at [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft).

If you or a loved one lives in a residential care or assisted living facility and has been a victim of

identity theft, contact the Attorney General's Health Care Fraud Hotline at (800) 242-2873.

## **Updates on your retirement**

### ***Marriage, divorce, death and your insurance***

**A** change in your marital status due to a divorce, marriage or death could affect your insurance or other pension benefits. Depending on which of these life-changing events occurs, you, or in the case of your death, a family member or your legal representative should notify ORS immediately so we can process any changes to your pension benefits.

Your insurance plan may also require changes. It might be necessary to enroll in the insurance plan offered as part of your pension benefits, or you may need to add or drop insurance coverage for family members. Contact ORS immediately to avoid interruptions or delays in your insurance coverage.

### ***The Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003***

**T**his law was signed on May 28, 2003, and lowered the tax withholding rates. In October, you may see a slight increase in your monthly pension amount. If you wish to adjust your tax withholding, you can complete the withholding form (R12X) on the ORS web site and return it to ORS. If you are unsure if you need to adjust your withholding you may wish to talk with your tax consultant or read IRS publication 3137 available at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).