



# Jacksonville Police and Fire Pension News

*"We Serve...and We Protect"*

**FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ADMINISTRATOR**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR.** Best wishes to our Members, Beneficiaries, and Friends for continued health, increased wealth, and more happiness in 2009. Goodbye to 2008, the worst year economically since 1901.

**THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC** situation can be most charitably described in one word "dreadful", warned the Levy Economics Institute in a recent report. Based on estimates of between \$380 – \$760 billion in tax cuts and increased federal spending in the incoming administration, increases in public debt will result in difficult to manage and unsustainably large fiscal deficits. Estimates also foresee higher levels of unemployment without globally coordinated substantial increases in our exports. In addition, we can expect higher levels of inflation down the road.



**CONSUMER CONFIDENCE** fell to a record low in the month of December, as the worst job market in sixteen years produced yet another month of dismal economic data. Consumers responding to a poll rated their present economic situation "poorly", with the index of this measure falling in December to 29.4 from November's 42.3, the lowest reading since the spring of 1992. This data reminds us that we are in for a lengthy recovery period, after the year long recession ends and the economy turns around. Consumers also faced in October the record fall of 18% in the price of single family homes from a year earlier. The erosion of confidence was reflected in the "rapid and steep deterioration of economic conditions that occurred in the fourth quarter of 2008" according to another report. Over 530 thousand jobs were lost during November alone, the highest monthly job loss in 34 years.

**THOUSANDS** of retail stores will close during 2009, resulting in thousands of additional workers facing unemployment when the result of the worst holiday retail season in 40 years is finalized. One group, The International Council of Shopping Centers, projected 148 thousand stores would close in 2008, the largest number of store closing since 2001, with an additional 70 thousand plus stores expected to shut down in the first half of 2009.

**OVERALL**, the national economic picture is projected by some "in the know folks" as very dismal for the first half of 2009, with a moderate recovery expected during the second half.

**HISTORICALLY**, in the year of recovery following economic recessions, the Stock Market has rebounded in excess of 30%. Our Fund was down over 12% in fiscal 2007 – 2008 and suffered significant losses during the dismal fourth quarter as outlined above.

**LOCALLY**, the economic news is generally just as bad all around. The Florida Constitutional Amendment enacted by the voters in January of 2008 increased the amount of "homestead exemption" from taxation from 25 to 50 thousand dollars, causing a reduction in local governmental revenues. The Legislature also financially pressed local units of government with additional restrictions and millage rollbacks requirements. The steep decline in the housing market discussed previously will result in lower property tax assessments and the resulting loss of tax revenue to the City. This loss will be partially offset with the enactment of several new fees.

**WE ARE READY TO HELP** the City in these times of great budget stress. In several recent meetings and discussions with the Administration leaders and Council President Ronnie Fussell, we have graphically presented a well documented history of where we are, how we got here, and options for future fiscal actions. Time will judge if our recent work was useful to the City leadership.

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**Important tax information**

**Reminder to Retirees and Beneficiaries:**

*Retirees and Beneficiaries who currently claim exemption from Federal income tax withholding should be made aware that his exemption from withholding requires an annual filing of the Form W-4. These individuals who currently claim exemption and want to continue claiming exemption from Federal withholding tax for calendar 2009 must file a new W-4 Form on or before February 16, 2009. The 2008 exempt forms will expire on February 16, 2009.*

*IRS regulation requires our office to institute maximum tax withholding for those employees who are currently claiming exempt status but do not re-file with their employer on or before February 16, 2009. (If a new W-4 form is not received Withholding tax will default to single with zero withholding allowance.)*

*If this tax situation affects you, please contact our office immediately.*

**DROP INFORMATION FOR 2009**

<b>Application Commencement Date</b>	<b>APPLICATION DROP DEADLINE deadline @ noon</b>	<b>Trustee Approval Date</b>	<b>DROP COMMENCEMENT DATE</b>	<b>DROP End Date</b>
02/02/09	03/06/09	03/17/09	04/04/09	03/28/14
05/01/09	06/05/09	06/16/09	07/11/09	07/04/14
08/03/09	09/04/09	09/15/09	10/03/09	09/26/14
11/02/09	12/04/09	12/15/09	01/09/10	01/02/15



**The Police and Fire Pension Fund Office  
will be closed Monday, January 19, 2008,  
in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

## Credit Unions and community banks are bright spots in difficult financial times

While the biggest banks are suffering from a subprime mortgage fallout, community banks and credit unions haven't had big losses. They never made risky loans.

Credit unions are different from other financial institutions because they are not-for-profit cooperatives. They are owned by the members and often operated by volunteer boards.

One financial analyst interviewed on *Fox Business* says the shareholders and board members in credit unions know their own money is at risk when they make a loan, so they are more conservative.

The capital in credit unions is at an all-time high, according to the Credit Unions National Association, Inc., in Madison, Wis. It's a safety cushion that protects them against loss and that allows them to continue in spite of recessions or turbulent financial markets.

They are known for share accounts, which may

pay a little more interest than bank savings accounts, and for their auto loans, which may cost a little less. Most also offer mortgages.

The lifeline of credit union funds is particularly important now because big banks have tightened their lending standards and may only make loans to people with the highest credit scores.

Some credit unions can refinance subprime mortgages, and offer banking products no longer available from other lenders, including a five-year adjustable-rate mortgage. One reason: They don't pay dividends to shareholders. The money is reinvested in loans to meet the needs of their members.

The American Bankers Association encourages consumers trying to consolidate debt or refinance mortgages to contact community banks. While they are typically conservative, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, they have plenty of money to lend.

## Money troubles? Deal with creditors yourself

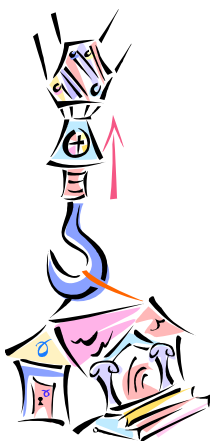
It sounds easy. Debt resolution companies offer to get creditors to settle for far less than you owe. All you have to do is give them a couple of thousand dollars up front and make a reasonable monthly payment after that.

But this is what could happen:

\*They make no payments on credit cards and other loans for several months, if ever. Your credit card and loan balances explode with late-payment and interest charges.

\*You could be plagued with calls from creditors and collection agencies. You could be sued and your wages could be garnished.

\*Your credit score plunges. Even if they manage to make a settlement for less money than you owe on an account, the arrangement makes your credit score fall even more.



\*By the time you realize they have not kept their promises, you could owe thousands of dollars more than when you signed on to the plan, and they still have your up-front money.

\*If you take them to court, you discover that the debt resolution company has no assets. There is no way to recover any of the money you have paid them.

Some non-profit companies do help, but a recent IRS investigation shows that many are not non-profit at all. They send their profits to an associated for-profit debt resolution company.

When circumstances have put you into a difficult financial situation, you are far better off to contact creditors personally and try to make a payment schedule you can afford.

## Bankruptcy filers should check their credit reports

Until recently, credit bureaus often continued to make credit reports that showed debts forgiven in Chapter 7 bankruptcy as open accounts. Some should have been removed years ago.

The District Court of California ordered the bureaus to revamp their systems by Oct. 1. Experian and TransUnion say they have done so. Equifax has declined to comment.

Forgiven debts should be erased from credit reports, but sometimes the bureaus were not notified that the debt had been discharged. If the debt still shows up, borrowers would have a lower credit score, be declined for a loan, or have to pay higher interest rates.

Anyone who has taken Chapter 7 should get a free credit report at [www.annualCreditReport.com](http://www.annualCreditReport.com) to check for any errors. Credit bureaus have 30 to 45 days to correct information.

With problems in subprime mortgages, more people could file bankruptcy this year.

## Auto repair prices on the Web

While prices of new cars are widely published on the Web, the cost of auto repairs is determined by a mechanic.

When you have a problem with your car that will have to be fixed, it would be nice if you could go to several shops in the area to determine who would charge the least but do a good job.

That takes time, so you could check it out on the Web. *Business Week's* Stephen Wildstrom has two recommendations. [RepairPal.com](http://RepairPal.com) is the site he likes best. It focuses on maintenance and service and has a simple design.

[DriverSide.com](http://DriverSide.com) is more complicated and also offers prices on new and used cars, as do many other sites. Both of these sites are comparatively new, however, and could add information over time. They give user ratings and reviews.

At [www.carpros.com/topics/prices](http://www.carpros.com/topics/prices), site operators say a mechanic will answer your questions.

### Shuistrology could bring you good luck in 2009

That's what author Ellen Whitehead calls it. She coined the term by combining feng shui and astrology.

It's all in fun but has grains of traditional wisdom that could make New Year's Day lucky for you. In her book *Make This Your Lucky Day*, she gives this advice:

**Make a clean sweep.** Clean your house or apartment before New Year's Day in order to clear the way for an exciting new year. Don't clean on New Year's Day or you could sweep away the luck.

If you can't clean the whole house, concentrate on the kitchen, the space that represents health and prosperity.

Move 27 things in your home to bring good luck from every direction.

**Attract good fortune.** Put 27 one-dollar bills in your wallet and 49 coins in your change purse or pocket. Then sprinkle ground ginger on them. Put some on your checkbook too.

**Look only to the future.** Don't discuss anything that happened in the past. Only talk about hopes and wishes for the future. Place nine small oranges in a bowl



on the table to attract sweet things in the new year. Bowls of fruit, nuts, and candy are lucky too.

**Get rid of the negatives.** Open the door at midnight and light firecrackers or bang pots and pans to scare away any destructive influences in your life.

**Make the first words positive.** The first words said to you after midnight can impact your good fortune. If necessary, tell someone what to say just after midnight. If you lose your temper or use bad language on this day, it can have a negative effect on the coming year.

**Eat lucky foods.** Some swear by corned beef and cabbage. For others, it's salmon, cabbage and oranges. Leafy greens symbolize money. In the southern states, people eat their collard greens along with black eyed peas for good luck. In Texas, the greens could be cabbage or turnip greens.

Greens are often combined with pork in dishes such as ham and cabbage and pork and sauerkraut.

**Make things bright.** Keep your home brightly lighted on New Year's Day.

**New window of opportunity for stroke treatment**

It has been thought that clot-busting medicine would only help stroke sufferers if given up to three hours after symptoms occurred. Only a third of stroke victims seek help that fast and less than five percent are now given TPA, the drug that breaks up clots and opens the artery.

A new study now suggests that clot-busting is successful even if given four hours or more after the event. A study by European doctors found the treatment to be effective up to 4 1/2 hours after the start of symptoms.

Doctors caution that it's important to get immediate attention if a stroke is suspected. Call 911 immediately.

**Fruity drinks, soft drinks, compared for diabetes risk**

What's better, a fruit drink or a bottle of sweet soda pop? The unhappy verdict, according to a Boston University study, is that fruit drinks contain as many calories as soft drinks, and some contain more. Both increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes because of their high calorie count, which causes weight gain.

The study of women showed those who consumed two or more soft drinks per day had a 24 percent greater risk compared with those who drank one per month. Women who consumed two or more sweet fruit drinks had a 31 percent increased risk.

Fruit drinks do not include grapefruit or orange juice, which are not associated with greater diabetes risk.

**Be aware of MRSA infection risk - the "Super Bug"**

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) is a bacterium responsible for difficult-to-treat infections in humans that is resistance to a large group of antibiotics.

In the past decade, Doctors have seen increasing numbers of cases in the community and the number of MRSA infections treated in hospitals has doubled.

Staph is a common bacteria that lives on our bodies. Healthy people can carry it without being infected. In fact, approximately 25% to 30% of us have staph bacteria in our noses. We are told that 95% of the non-health-care-related infections found in the community are limited to the skin and soft tissues. However, if untreated, the infection can get into the blood stream causing a systemic infection of vital organs.

At risk populations include people with weak immune systems, athletes participating in contact sports, young children, the elderly, persons staying in a health care facility for an extended period of time, and anyone living in a confined space with other people.

*Doctors recommend taking common-sense precautions to prevent MRSA and any other infection.*

- \*Keep hands clean by washing frequently or using hand sanitizers.
- \*Cover skin abrasions or cuts with a clean, dry bandage to prevent infection until the wound is healed.
- \*Don't share soap or towels that have come in contact with skin.
- \*Keep hands away from the nose.
- \*Watch for what seems to be a spider bite or pimple that doesn't heal. If it becomes red and swollen or pus is present, see a doctor immediately.

**To perk up your memory:**

**Take a walk and eat a fish**

Though they are some distance from each other in your body, your heart and your brain are linked.

Doctors at the American Heart Association say that when the brain is fueled by plenty of oxygen-rich blood, it works much better and can even reduce age-related tissue damage.

Brain tissue is vital for memory and cognitive function. To keep your blood pumping and your brain functioning at its best, take a brisk walk every day or get some other exercise, whether it's in the gym or around the block.

What you eat also affects how well you remember someone's name or what you were thinking about before you were interrupted. Omega-3s found in fish and



fish oil promote healthy brain functioning. They contain DHA and EPA that are both vital to proper functioning of the brain. If you don't eat fish regularly, a supplement is advised.

And fish oil can make you look better too. It gives skin a more vibrant look by enhancing the production of collagen and elastin.

Fish oil lowers the risk of heart disease by increasing HDL, the good cholesterol, and it increases serotonin production, a hormone that tends to make people happy.

It also reduces inflammatory pain from arthritis and reduces or eliminates dry eye syndrome.

**So take a walk and eat a fish. Don't forget.**

**Improve bone density**

Since you could live to age 90, it pays to preserve or increase the strength of your bones. Weight-bearing activities stimulate bone to react by increasing bone density. They include walking, running, push-ups, weight lifting, and anything done while on your feet.

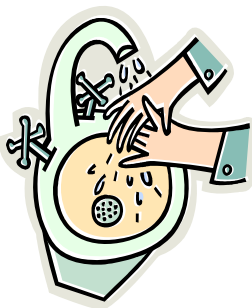
Some research, say doctors at Duke University, shows that gardening and doing yard work once a week is better than walking or jogging if you already have osteoporosis.

**Take vitamin D with food**

Doctors at the University Hospital Zurich and elsewhere emphasize that it is important to take vitamin D supplements of 800 to 1000 IU. The benefits of vitamin D continue to be found, especially as an addition to calcium for strong bones.

Vitamin D is fat soluble. It will not be absorbed unless there is some fat consumed at the same time. If taking it without food, at least drink a glass of milk with it.

**Don't forget to wash**



It's the cold and flu season. That can make you think twice about going to places where you will come in contact with a lot of people as you would at the mall or in a crowded cafe. Some of those people will be contagious.

In those circumstances and at work, your best protection is hand washing. Anything you touch could carry the flu virus, but it does wash off.

**Higher fiber diet can improve breathing**

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences studied middle-aged people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Those who had the highest daily fiber intake had better lung function than those with the lowest fiber intake.

Recommended intake: 30 to 38 grams for men, 21 to 25 grams for women.



**Cabbage has become a New Year's tradition**

Cabbage, the plainest Jane of the New Year foods, actually comes from a very colorful plant family.

*Brassica oleracea* has been cultivated and selectively changed for thousands of years. Today, the cabbage family includes the green, crinkly leafed kale, white cauliflower, green broccoli, and tiny green brussels sprouts.

There are a number of forms of cabbage itself, from the white to light green standard cabbage to the savories which come in white, red, green, and brown.



According to the University of Florida extension service, cabbage is relatively low in calories, but it was popular with early civilizations since it grows quickly (about three months) and tolerates cool temperatures very well. In cooler climates it can be planted in summer and fall. It is a good source of potassium, and vitamins A and C.

Cabbage is one of many foods popular for cooking on New Years. You'll find it part of the menu in Europe, including Germany, Croatia, Bosnia, and many parts of the United States.

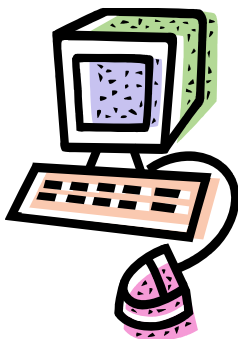
### When shopping online or in person, decide how much your time is worth

There's a story circulating about a man who wanted a certain size of television set with a flat screen and other features. Because it would be expensive, he spent a lot of time comparing brands and prices on the Internet.

He visited half a dozen stores searching for the right model, then went back again and checked the same sets on the Internet. Finally, he found just what he wanted for \$3,000.

At that point, he did two things. He decided he didn't want to spend that much, and adding up his time, he discovered he had spent the equivalent of an entire work week on the project.

It's an extreme case, but plenty of people spend too much time shopping. Others drive miles down the



road to save a couple of dollars on gas.

Still others spend valuable time studying the food ads and clipping coupons that will save them 25 cents at the grocery store. But they think little of spending money for an expensive restaurant meal.

Michael J. Silverstein, author of *Treasure Hunt: Inside the Mind of the New Consumer*, suggests keeping a record of the amount of time you spend shopping, for an item, what you were looking at, your estimate of the original price, and the price you actually paid.

Quoted in *Money* magazine, Silverstein said if you put 40 hours into studying a purchase that netted you a \$200 savings, you have to ask yourself if your time is worth more than \$5 an hour.

### Full name to be required

Beginning in July 2009, airline passengers will have to provide their first, last, and middle names, and their dates of birth in order to board the plane. The rule applies to passengers on flights beginning or ending in the United States.

Airlines pass the information to the Transportation Security Administration to compare with the government's watch list.

The comparison can be made in a few seconds. The TSA says the new rule will greatly reduce the number of people hassled at airports because their name resembles that of a terrorist.

Passengers who make reservations, but don't give the information, will not be allowed to print out boarding passes at home or at kiosks. They will have to go to an airline counter and show an identification card with the information.

Previously, passengers had to give only a last name and first initial. Under that rule, some children were identified as possible terrorists as was Senator Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.



### Carryon bag weight limits

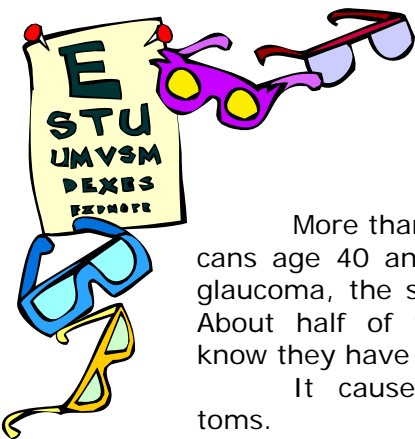
Airlines have their own rules about how much a carryon bag can weigh. Some say 40 pounds while others allow 50. Check with them before packing. The maximum size for a carryon is 22 x 9 x 14 inches.

Carrying a bag rather than checking it has several advantages. It's free, it won't get lost in transit, and you won't have to wait for it at the baggage claim site.

Wheeled bags are nice, but take more space. On a crowded flight, you might be asked to check a wheeled bag.

They also weigh much more and have less interior space. A soft-sided bag without wheels allows you to pack more and it's easier to fit into an overhead bin.

### January is Glaucoma Awareness Month



More than two million Americans age 40 and older suffer from glaucoma, the sneak thief of sight. About half of these people don't know they have the disease.

It causes no early symptoms.

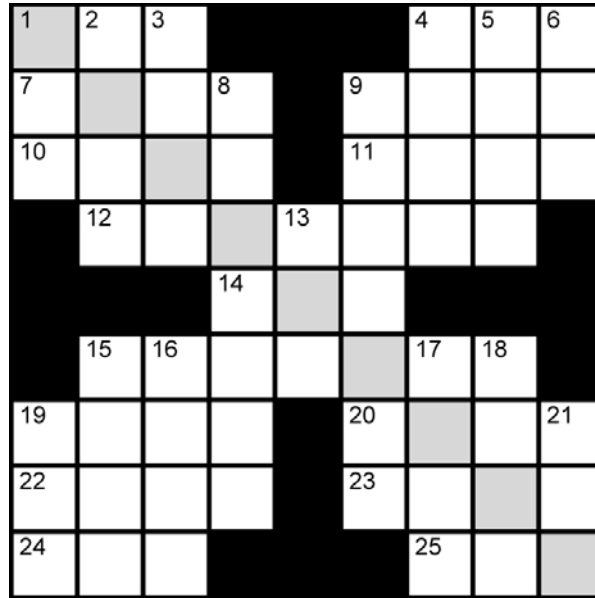


HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS

## AUSSIE COUNTRY

### Across

1. Dadaism founder
4. Amaze
7. Felt bad about
9. Arch type
10. \_\_\_-en-scene
11. Partner of void
12. Wrote down
14. Be mistaken
15. Mythical creature
19. Emcee
20. Applaud
22. Pickable
23. Make a sweater
24. \_\_\_ and the Family Stone
25. Santa \_\_\_

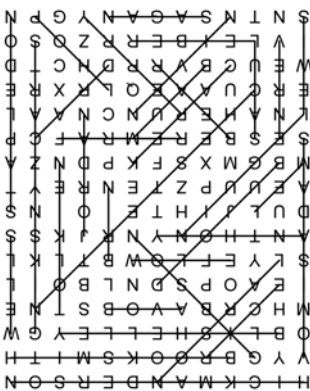
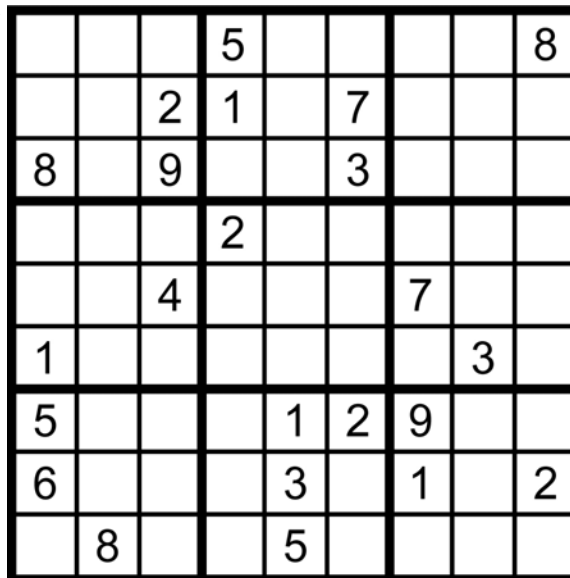


### Down

1. Escort's offering
2. Archaeological site
3. Cancun coin
4. Chills and fever
5. Fuse
6. Moray, e.g.
8. Easing of tensions between nations
9. Proceeding as planned
13. Gallery display
15. Spring
16. Catch sight of
17. Arm bone
18. Parade spoiler
19. "48\_\_\_"
21. "Harper Valley \_\_\_"



## Sudoku



A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

### Sci-Fi Writers

H I C K M A N D E R S O N  
V Y G B R O O K S M I T H  
O B L I S H E L L E Y G W  
M H C R B A V O B S T N E  
I E A O P S D N L B O I L  
S L Y E F L O W B T L K L  
A N T H O N Y N R J K S S  
D U L J I H T E I O I N S  
A E U U P Z T E N R E Y T  
M B G M X S F K P D N Z A  
S E S B E R E M R A F C P  
L N A H E P U N C N A A L  
E R C U A A E Q L R X R E  
W E U C B V R R D H C T D  
I V L E I B E R R Z O S O  
S N T N S A G A N Y G P N

- |          |            |             |
|----------|------------|-------------|
| Adams    | Chesterton | Perry       |
| Anderson | Farmer     | Pohl        |
| Anthony  | Gibson     | Rice        |
| Asimov   | Hickman    | Sagan       |
| Baum     | Jordan     | Shelley     |
| Bear     | King       | Smith       |
| Blish    | Larson     | Stapledon   |
| Bova     | Le Guin    | Straczynski |
| Brin     | Leiber     | Tolkien     |
| Brooks   | Lem        | Verne       |
| Bujold   | Lewis      | Wells       |
| Capek    | Lucas      | Wolfe       |
| Card     | Niven      |             |

