

**Consumer Forum on being Financially Savvy in Tough Economic Times  
to be held at Walsh College in Troy on Saturday, March 7, 2009**

In recognition of National Consumer Protection Week (March 1 – 7), Oakland County Commissioner Tim Burns will be hosting a Consumer Forum to that will provide tips and advice from a panel of financial experts at the Troy campus of Walsh College on Saturday, March 7, 2009 at 1 pm. The event will take place in Walsh College's Barry Center Auditorium and is FREE to attend. A panel consisting of Ken Ross (Commissioner – Michigan Office of Financial & Insurance Regulation), Susan Tompor (Personal Finance Columnist with the *Detroit Free Press*), Rick Bloom (Financial Columnist with the *Observer & Eccentric* Newspapers & host of the RICK BLOOM SHOW on 1400AM WDTK), and Kathy Williams (a certified AARP and HUD mortgage counselor with Oakland County's Community and Home Improvement Division) will make presentations on being a smart consumer in tough economic times and answer financial questions from the audience. The Consumer Forum will be moderated by Oakland County Commissioner Tim Burns.

“Given the current tough economic conditions, consumers literally can't afford to make bad financial decisions,” said Oakland County Commissioner Tim Burns (D-Clawson). “This Consumer Forum will provide unbiased advice to answer your financial questions from local experts who have no incentive to sell you any products or services. I encourage people to join us at Walsh College on March 7 to gain valuable tips on being a smart consumer when it comes to financial matters.”

**Ken Ross** was named Commissioner, Office of Financial and Insurance Regulation, by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm effective February 22nd, 2008. As Commissioner, Mr. Ross is responsible for the regulation of Blue Cross Blue Shield, 27 HMOS, 139 banks, 169 domestic insurance companies, 217 credit unions, 1,303 foreign insurance companies, 1,750 investment advisers, 2,100 securities broker-dealers, 7,772 consumer finance lenders, 146,419 insurance agents, and 115,000 securities agents.

Prior to coming to OFIR, Mr. Ross served as the Vice President of Regulatory and Legal Affairs for the Michigan Credit Union League (MCUL). Responsibilities included directing all aspects of MCUL's regulatory advocacy, compliance and legal affairs program. Mr. Ross served as the Director of Regulatory Affairs for the MCUL from 2000 to 2003. Prior to his work with the MCUL, Mr. Ross was appointed an Assistant Attorney General, serving under Attorneys General Frank Kelley and Jennifer Granholm. Mr. Ross served in the Tort Defense Division, representing the interests of the State of Michigan, its agencies and employees, with responsibility for handling litigation at trial and at the appellate level in both state and federal courts. He is a graduate of Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

**Susan Tompor** is a personal financial columnist with the *Detroit Free Press*. She has written about email scams, financial crooks, credit card rip-offs, debt and other consumer issues for more than 15 years. She launched a personal finance column for the *Detroit News* in 1992 and later moved to the *Detroit Free Press*. She has received several national awards, and had been named best financial columnist in the Midwest three times by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. Susan Tompor is a member of the board of governors for the Society of American Business Editors and Writers Inc.

**Rick Bloom** has served clients in the area of financial planning since 1984. He currently hosts "The Rick Bloom Show" on News Talk 1400 WDTK-AM-Detroit, Sundays from noon to 2:00 p.m., and also writes a financial column each Thursday and Sunday in the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. In addition, Rick airs twice-daily business updates throughout Michigan on the affiliate stations of the Michigan Radio Network.

Rick served as host of the popular "Money Talk" radio show on WXYT 1270-AM for 16 years, and was also a daily financial columnist for the *Detroit News* for over ten years. He also wrote twice-weekly financial columns for the *Oakland Press*. Rick has been selected as one of the Top 250 Financial Planners by *Worth Magazine* for several years consecutively, and has been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* and other national publications on financial planning and the Stock Market. He is also a frequent spokesperson on financial matters on local TV and radio shows.

**Kathy Williams** is a certified AARP and HUD mortgage counselor with Oakland County's Community and Home Improvement Division. She provides counseling and advice to tenants and homeowners on property maintenance and financial management; mortgage default resolutions services, including delinquency, default, or foreclosure problems; and reverse mortgage counseling to allow seniors to stay in their home and maintain a decent lifestyle.

**Tim Burns** represents the cities of Clawson and Troy on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners [District 19]. The twenty-five member Board of Commissioners is the "legislature" for Oakland County, making policy and overseeing an annual budget of over half a billion dollars. Burns serves as the Vice Chair of the County's Public Service Committee, which is responsible for informing the Board of Commissioners on all health matters affecting the public welfare of county residents. It also makes recommendations on all social service programs and policy changes, and it reviews and makes recommendations on law enforcement matters.

Burns also serves as the Public Affairs Director for the Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern Michigan. He is responsible for government and legal affairs, media relations, marketing communications, and community outreach. Mr. Burns is an attorney who graduated from University of Detroit Mercy Law School. He completed his legal clerkship with the Michigan Attorney General's High Tech Crime Unit.

County Commissioner Burns sponsored a resolution (MR #09027 – Feb 5, 2009) unanimously passed by the Board of Commissioners authorizing Oakland County to join federal, state, and local government agencies and national consumer organizations in recognizing the 11<sup>th</sup> annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), March 1-7, 2009. NCPW's 2009 theme – ***Nuts and Bolts: Tools for Today's Economy*** – highlights consumer education efforts in financial literacy. NCPW partners will provide information that can help people get the most for their money, whether they are trying to stretch their paychecks, find a quick fix for a spotty credit history, or tell the difference between a real deal and a potentially fraudulent product or service. Visit the official NCPW website at [www.consumer.gov/ncpw](http://www.consumer.gov/ncpw)

**For additional information on the NCPW Consumer Forum @ Walsh College at 3838 Livernois in Troy Mi 48007 , please contact Julia Ruffin, Board of Commissioners' Community Liaison at (248) 858 – 1092.**