
The Bucket

By Editorial Staff *Wed, Oct 26, 2011*

Brief or late-breaking items from Transamerica, JD Mellberg Financial, Allianz Life, Security Benefit and ING DIRECT USA.

Transamerica Retirement Services enlists Mesirow Financial as plan fiduciary

Transamerica Retirement Services now offers a new ERISA Section 3(21) fiduciary service to help retirement plan advisors and sponsors mitigate investment fiduciary risk.

The service, provided by the Investment Strategies group at Mesirow Financial, provides plan-level investment advice related to the selection and monitoring of the plan's investment line-up. Mesirow Financial acts as an investment fiduciary to the plan along with the sponsor, who maintains ultimate control over the plan's investment menu.

"This is a flexible, fiduciary solution for plan sponsors who want to reduce their fiduciary risk, and for advisors who do not currently offer fiduciary services," said Stig Nybo, president of Transamerica Retirement Services. "Transamerica is offering small- to mid-market retirement plans and their advisors additional, professional tools to assist in managing the plan's investment menu."

Mesirow Financial independently analyzes Transamerica's investment platform, creating an "Elite List" of approved investments for sponsors seeking ERISA Section 3(21) fiduciary coverage.

Sponsors must choose at least one Elite List investment in each of five designated, core asset classes in order to maintain coverage. Alternatively, the sponsor may use one of Mesirow Financial's suggested, sample investment line-ups based on the plan's demographics.

Transamerica Retirement Services Corporation, headquartered in Los Angeles, designs custom retirement plans for small- to mid-sized businesses. The company and its affiliates serve some 15,500 plans with more than \$19.5 billion in assets.

"Annuity information hub" and sales site launched

JD Mellberg Financial has launched website designed to be "your independent authority on annuities." The site, located at <http://www.annuitynational.com>, is meant to work as a "public clearinghouse" for retirement planning strategies as well as an "annuity information hub," the company said in a release.

The site offers a kit of online resources that include descriptions of different types of annuities, along with annuity companies, rates and an annuity calculator.

Also included are articles about annuities and Mellberg's seven-part online video series, "The Truth About Annuities in Plain English." The sites offers a toll-free number that visitors can call to talk to a licensed financial advisor.

Allianz Life animated video series “demystifies” annuities

“*The ABCs of Annuities*,” a new animated three-video series that “demystifies today’s annuities,” has been launched by Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America, the company announced in a release.

Each three- to five-minute segment addresses a separate topic, indicated by its name: “Retirement Realities,” “Annuity Basics,” and “Annuity Myths and Truths.”

More than half of the respondents in the recent Allianz Life study, “Reclaiming the Future,” expressed distaste for the word “annuity”—even after they described an annuity-like product as their ideal financial vehicle. Annuities continue to be seen as “confusing.” Many people say they formed their opinions about annuities decades ago and they haven’t studied annuities since then.

To access *The ABCs of Annuities*, visit www.allianzlife.com/GetInformed/ABC_Annuities.aspx.

Hal Downing joins Security Benefit as regional VA sales director

Security Benefit, a Guggenheim Partners Company, announced that Hal Downing has joined its Personal Retirement Savings (PRS) Group as a regional director for the Midwest region.

Downing will be responsible for marketing the EliteDesigns variable annuity, which offers 200 investment options, to Registered Investment Advisors (RIAs) and other fee-only advisors and their clients.

Downing has previous experience in annuity sales at Traveler’s Group, New England Funds, Sun America mutual funds, AIM mutual funds, and Prudential-Bache Securities. He studied business and finance at Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis and holds securities, real estate, and insurance licenses.