



New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc

Improving The Lives of Senior Citizens & Families in NY State

www.nysenior.org • 800-333-4374 • www.nysenior.org

2013 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ECONOMIC SECURITY

StateWide believes that economic security should be defined as having the income, resources and services and supports necessary to meet all basic needs, including housing, health care, transportation, food, miscellaneous essentials, and, when necessary, long term care.

- StateWide recommends that the state government use 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) as a closer approximation of economic security rather than 100% of FPL, to shape planning efforts as well as eligibility for service delivery. In so doing, the State will be able to direct services to those with the greatest economic and social need, including older adults with low-incomes, by focusing on those with incomes that fall short of economic security.
- StateWide will fight cuts to food programs, heating assistance and other important human service programs that provide assistance so that seniors and their families can live with dignity in the community. StateWide supports continuation of funding for the Weatherization Referral and Assistance Program (WRAP) for older New Yorkers to provide coordination of energy efficiency services for older persons.
- StateWide supports legislation to empower local assessors to extend the deadline for basic and enhanced School Tax Relief Program (STAR) applications until January 10 of the following year.
- Statewide supports the Age friendly banking initiative which will address the banking needs of seniors ranging from physical amenities in bank locations to bank product and services designed to better serve senior, disabled citizens and low income populations.

Financial Justice

- Statewide supports efforts to end predatory lending.
- StateWide supports efforts to prevent property foreclosures.
- StateWide opposes efforts to alter the ban on usurious small-dollar loans.

○ **Housing**

- StateWide supports the expansion of affordable housing for the elderly throughout the state, including the establishment of a partnership authority to finance or collaborate in the financing of projects.
- StateWide encourages the expansion of senior citizen rent exemption and tax abatement programs and other adjustments to eligibility criteria for the exemptions that allows for non-reimbursed medical and prescription drug costs.

○ **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

StateWide supports making a permanent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in the state share of SSI in order to decrease the rate of poverty among our state's poorest elderly, blind and disabled residents.

- StateWide urges New York State (NYS) to pass through the annual Federal COLA without cutting NYS benefit.
- StateWide seeks renewed funding for community-based SSI specialist training, education, outreach, and enrollment assistance.
- Statewide advocates increasing the NYS supplement now by 20%.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The escalation of health care costs and failure of existing legislation to achieve universal coverage require continued emphasis on this vital issue. StateWide supports Universal Health Insurance, as the most effective vehicle for achieving universal coverage and cost control.

- StateWide will take the lead to advocate universal health care for all and supports the establishment of a commission to make recommendations for New York.
- StateWide will monitor the implementation of the Affordable Care Act to ensure that it is fair and realistic for senior citizens and their families.
- StateWide will support legislation requiring hospitals to inform patients within 48 hours whether they have been admitted to the hospital or in “observation status”.
- StateWide will fight state cuts in Medicaid that reduce coverage, access and quality of care not only for seniors, but the vulnerable disabled, and low-income children and families. We support the policy agenda of Medicaid Matters New York.
- StateWide opposes medical malpractice reform efforts that place a cap on an injured patient’s right to be awarded economic compensation for medical errors.
- StateWide calls for legislation to increase the Medicaid income eligibility level to 133% of the FPL for the aged, blind, and disabled.

- StateWide supports legislation to require training in geriatric medicine for physicians and physician assistants to improve treatment for the specific needs of older adults.
- StateWide will oppose government efforts to raise needed capital for hospital by allowing for conversion from non-profit status to publicly traded corporation status.

○**Prescription Drugs**

- StateWide urges the inclusion of persons with disabilities under Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) and the continued funding of the EPIC program to ensure affordability of prescriptions.
- StateWide works to promote and protect New York consumer access to sources of safe, affordable prescription drugs. We support efforts to allow safe prescription drug importation to provide legal access to safe and affordable drugs from abroad.
- StateWide advocates swift implementation of the NYS bulk purchasing law, intended to lower the cost of prescription drugs for all.
- StateWide encourages the strengthening of oversight of drug companies' marketing and advertising expenditures. We support regulation and accountability of Pharmaceutical Benefits Managers in New York and urge monitoring of abuses, such as not passing on savings to clients, hiding rebates, and steering market share to certain high cost drugs for particular drug manufacturers.
- StateWide supports the disclosure of gifts to prescribers from pharmaceutical industry representatives.
- StateWide supports the decriminalization of medical marijuana.

○**Long Term Care**

- StateWide supports strengthening compliance with the Olmstead Supreme Court decision to provide care in the least restrictive settings.
- StateWide supports mandating minimum staffing levels in nursing homes to ensure the safety and care of residents. We support strengthening training programs and requirements for long term care providers, including training for nurse aides, and requiring nursing homes to maintain staffing levels with trained Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), instead of the more poorly trained and poorly supervised feeding assistants. Further, we urge the state to allow for diversion of people in need of long-term care from facilities that have insufficient staffing.
- StateWide supports a careful review by the Department of Health of the qualifications and competency of adult home and assisted living facilities which seek further

certification to care for vulnerable persons to make sure that those with poor records regarding patient care are excluded.

- StateWide urges an investment in home and community based services that prevent premature admission to long term care institutions and provide a safe alternative to institutionalized care.
- StateWide urges enhanced funding for the Community Empowerment and Livable Communities initiatives in the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA).
- StateWide urges the adoption of policies that promote consumer-directed services.
- StateWide will monitor the implementation of Medicaid Managed Long Term Care and will advocate appropriate community based services to ensure access to and choice of culturally competent providers to meet patients needs. We will urge the inclusion of socially-oriented aging services providers in managed care networks.
- StateWide supports funding for an external consumer ombuds program for Medicaid beneficiaries enrolled in managed long term care programs.

AGING SERVICES

- StateWide supports maintaining the NYSOFA as an independent agency which advocates within state government for older New Yorkers.
- StateWide supports an increase of \$1 million in funds for the Long Term Care Ombuds program.
- StateWide supports restoration of funding to our Patients Rights Helpline/ Care Advocacy Project to \$150,000 in order to establish a hospital ombuds program across the state.
- StateWide urges the restoration of the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011-12 fifty per cent funding reductions to aging services programs funded by the NYSOFA, including StateWide's Patients Rights Hotline.
- StateWide supports funding to allow Medicare and Medicaid enrollees, and caregivers to receive unbiased information and counseling that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to ensure informed decision making when choosing health insurance and prescription coverage plans.

- StateWide supports increased funding of the New York Connects program and funding provided to expand to New York City and counties not currently served.
- StateWide supports increased funding for National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC) and aging in place/community projects.
- StateWide urges the restoration of funding in the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) for kinship caregiver programs.
- StateWide urges funding to educate seniors and constituents on the existence and type of elder abuse so that more people can become aware of this issue and report instances to the authorities.
- StateWide proposes that elder abuse cases be reported to the police and prosecuted as a crime.
- StateWide supports requiring a biennial report on the incidence of elder abuse in New York State.
- StateWide supports the expansion of outreach efforts to underserved populations and those with special needs including racial and ethnic minorities, the poor, rural seniors and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community which has an increasing number of older adults.
- StateWide urges legislation that would give incentives for more professionals to work in the geriatric, mental health, and geriatric social work fields (Ex. partial loan forgiveness).

REVENUE

StateWide promotes tax fairness.

- StateWide urges the Legislature to adopt higher tax rates for higher earning households with annual incomes above \$250,000.
- StateWide supports enactment of a property tax “circuit breaker” to reduce taxes on persons with lower incomes.

ELECTIONS

Statewide will advocate for ballot accessibility so that voters are not disenfranchised, including:

- Urging appropriate font size.
- Opposing onerous voter identification laws.

StateWide supports public campaign financing which is modeled on the system used in New York City to provide matching funds for donations raised.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING (FRACKING)

StateWide supports the efforts of New Yorkers against fracking and urges legislators to prevent any further action by the oil and gas industry to frack for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale which resides under large parts of New York State.

Glossary of Abbreviations	
CNAs	Certified Nursing Assistants
COLA	Cost-of-Living Adjustment
EPIC	Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage
FPL	Fiscal Poverty Level
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
NORC	National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center
NYSOFA	New York State Office for the Aging
OCFS	Office of Children and Family Services
SFY	State Fiscal Year
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
STAR	School Tax Relief Program
WRAP	Weatherization Referral Assistance Program