

New York StateWide Senior Action Council

MEMBER UPDATE

Spring 2014



Message from the Executive Director

Senior Activism as Vital as Ever.

Maria Alvarez The increase in the senior population underscores the need and obligation of local, state, and federal governments to make accommodations for their elder constituents. It is also the responsibility of our membership and seniors everywhere to inform the legislators how we are affected by their decisions, and how to enact policies that will ensure a continued life with dignity in the community.

And the message is getting out.

Our **Elder Economic Security Measure** has served to illustrate the tremendous need for more fairness in programs for seniors and families. Through our advocacy and unity with seniors and groups all over the country, we



were able to make the case and convince Congress and the President of the importance of **preserving** safety net programs like **SNAP** (nutrition programs) and **abandoning the Chained CPI** which would

have reduced Social Security payments to seniors for generations to come.

On the state level, we are pleased that the **Governor's budget proposal did not reduce the senior services budget for congregate services. However, a flat budget in the face of a growing population in essence constitutes a reduction in availability of services.** If the counties are unable to assign the appropriate amount of home care hours, meals on wheels, or congregate services, to people in need, seniors will suffer.

Our upcoming goals will include building on our success and advocating for an enhanced infrastructure to accommodate age-friendly communities. There are many aspects to these measures, but one thing is certain... **we will not be able to do it without the strength, power and voice that only senior activists can provide!**

Inside this issue:

Exec. Director Message	1
EPIC and Social Security	2
Real Property Tax Breaks	3
Low Vision	4
Observation Status Law	5
Membership	6
Membership Dues App.	7
Save the Date	8

Medicare Patient's Rights Helpline 1-800-333-4374

EPIC Fails To Cover Certain Drugs.

The NYS Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage Program (EPIC) helps many older New Yorkers with their prescription drug costs. To qualify for EPIC, a senior (65 years or older), must have Medicare Part D coverage, and moderate income (annual income below \$35,000 if single or \$50,000 if married.)



Recently, we have heard of cases where EPIC has refused to cover some drugs. Generally, EPIC helps with the costs of drugs that are on your Part D plan's formulary, or approved listing. However, a provision of state law requires drug manufacturers who wish to participate with EPIC to provide the state with rebates. If a drug has been prescribed to you and is included in your plan's coverage, but the manufacturer does not provide the state a rebate, you may not have help from EPIC with reduced co-payments.

If you have encountered this problem, please contact StateWide at **1-800-333-4374**. We need to understand the impact on seniors so that we can work with state policymakers to address the problem.

In The Future...



If your annual income is more than the current limits on EPIC eligibility, you may be able to participate in the future. The NYS Senate Independent Democratic

Conference has proposed an expansion of the EPIC program to meet the needs of those with slightly higher incomes.

The details of the proposal are still being worked on, as part of the Conference's *Affordable New York* plan.

StateWide will be working with legislators to expand and improve EPIC and will provide updates to seniors if changes are underway.

Paperless Social Security

You've heard that Social Security has gone paperless, and checks are no longer mailed to most recipients. Some local offices have been closing or reducing hours or services.

As of August 2014, Social Security Number (SSN) printouts will not be available in field offices. Beneficiaries needing proof of their SSN or new cards will need to apply for a replacement card.

Beginning October 2014, field offices will stop providing benefit verification letters, except in emergency situations. Proof of Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is available to most beneficiaries by registering for their personal account online at:

- ◆ www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount
- ◆ or by calling 1 (800) 772-1213

New Real Property Tax Breaks Proposed.

State legislators are grappling with a state budget proposal by Governor Cuomo to grant real property tax rebates.

The Governor's proposal could have a negative impact on local services.

This proposal ties property tax rebates to a reduced level of local government and school district spending. Currently, local governments pay for essential, but non-mandatory services – such as those provided by local offices for the aging. We fear that the pressure of reducing expenses may cause counties to cut or eliminate these programs.

The Governor proposes several years of property tax breaks and would provide relief only where a municipal government or school district stays within a 2% inflationary rate of growth during the first year of the proposal.

During the second year, the Governor expects the same condition **plus** – the taxing jurisdiction must also reduce costs through consolidation of services. Residents in those local governments where streamlining has already occurred will not be rewarded for those efforts. The Governor proposes additional breaks in later years for property tax payers and renters.

Property tax relief is much needed for lower income homeowners. Relief is also needed for low income renters who spend a significant portion of their income on housing. StateWide supports a fair solution, known as a *circuit breaker* to provide relief – with no strings attached.

[HELPFUL HINT]

In addition to the STAR school tax relief program, there is another program for senior citizen homeowners –

Form RP-467.

Local governments and school districts can provide relief for residents 65 years of age or older, with certain income limitations including:

- ◆ a 50% reduction for those with incomes **less than** \$29,000;
- ◆ a break for those with incomes **less than** \$38,000 at a lower rate.

Call your local assessor or the clerk of your local government for more information. The application, **Form RP-467**, should be filed with the locality, and a renewal application is required each year.

You may already be eligible for some help with property taxes that you may not be receiving!

Helping People with Low Vision Stay Active and Independent.



The leading cause of vision loss in older Americans is age-related macular degeneration (ARMD), also known as “low vision”. Low vision is defined as a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by standard eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery, and that interferes with the ability to perform everyday activities.

Legal blindness is defined as best corrected (with glasses or contacts), visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, or a visual field no more than 20 degrees in the better eye (ex. tunnel vision). Someone who has low vision may be declared legally blind by their optometrist or ophthalmologist if they meet the criteria.

While a low vision diagnosis may seem as if there can be a total loss of independence, and frustration, a referral for rehabilitation therapy presents the latest in low vision technologies and adaptive devices that help in adapting to a low vision diagnosis for an improved quality of life.

Vision rehabilitation therapy can help individuals adjust to vision loss by combining training with adaptive devices and strategies for independent living. Adaptive devices such as magnifiers, special glasses, talking clocks, watches and calculators; large print items such as timers, remote controls, calendars and recipe books and writing templates can make it easier to perform daily activities.



VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
NYC - (212) 625-1616

Olmsted Center for Sight
Buffalo - (716) 882-1025

The Southern Tier Association for the Visually Impaired
Elmira - (607) 734-1554

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc. (AVRE)
Binghamton – (607) 724-2428

Association for the Visually Impaired Rockland/Orange Counties - 845-574-4950

Aurora of Central New York Syracuse - 315-422-7263

Chautauqua Blind Association Jamestown - 716-664-6660

Glens Falls Association for the Blind 518-792-3421

North Country Association for the Visually Impaired
518-562-2330

ABVI-Goodwill
Rochester - (585) 697-5736

Northeastern Assoc. of the Blind at Albany
Hudson Valley & Capital Region - (518) 463-1211

Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Central NY – Utica Office
(315) 797-2233

Medicare Patient's Rights Helpline 1-800-333-4374

StateWide Working to Monitor NY's Observation Status Notification Law.

On January 19, 2014, NY's Observation Status Law went into effect requiring hospitals to notify Medicare patients when they are placed in "observation status" instead of being admitted within 24 hours of the billing decision being made.

Hospitals must alert patients in observation status that they should immediately contact their insurance company to determine if there are any changes in their coverage.

Knowing patient status is critical because if follow up rehabilitation care is needed in a nursing home setting Part A of Medicare will only cover the cost for patients who have been actually admitted for 3 days and observation status days do not count. Prior to the law, hospitals were not required to inform patients of their status and many have been shocked with large bills for nursing home care.

We encourage you to call StateWide's Patients Rights Helpline—1-800-333-4374 if you have any observation status related questions.

Moving forward, we have 2 distinct activities to fulfill:

1. **Monitoring the Implementation of the Law:** We need your continued help to make sure that the law is being implemented. (See box)



2. **Federal Action:** In Congress, under **The Improving Access to Medicare Coverage Act (S. 569 and HR 1179)** would count any stays in a hospital toward the 3 day coverage requirement and give patients additional appeals rights. This year StateWide Chapters will be advocating for passage of this bill into law. **We need our members and friends to call their congress members to urge passage of this important legislation.**

If you have been hospitalized after January 20, 2014 and were impacted by observation status...

LET US KNOW:

- ◆ Did you receive a notice from the hospital that you were in observation status?
- ◆ Was there an explanation of what this meant?
- ◆ Did the hospital fail to give you timely notice of observation status?
- ◆ Have you appealed to have your status changed to be formally admitted?
- ◆ Have you won or lost an observation status appeal?

2014 Individual Members:

Jill Aguanno	Kingston
Judy Aldous	Colton
Jolene Apholz	Ballston Spa
Daisi Ball	Buffalo
Margaret Baskin	Buffalo
Anita Bernstein	Spring Valley
Anniebelle Biggs	Nanuet
Larry Bondi	Buffalo
Kay Bonetti	Palmyra
Bethany Brassard	Redwood
Brenda Brown	Buffalo
Evelyn & Vincent	
Castello	Bardonia
Lorraine Chambley	Buffalo
Tony Chestnut	Buffalo
Constance Clausen	Fresh Meadows
Joy Cooke	New York
Dorothy DeMay	Newark
Tamea Dixon	Buffalo
Jo Dorfman	Suffern
Jane Fay	Ogdensburg
Mirta Feliciano	New York
Karen Frishkoff	Ghent
Barbara Galanty	Athens
Christina Giordano	Albany
Juliette Graves	Buffalo
Leora Gueron	Fresh Meadows
Judy Haer	Potsdam
Anita Hayes	Gouverneur
Lena Hayes	Brooklyn
Rita Heiferman	Airmont
Betty Herman	New York
Eleanor Hewes	Brasher Falls
Maureen Hobbs	Brooklyn
Todd Horwitt	Albany
Sheriff & Mrs. Tim	
Howard	South Wales
Anna Huber	Spring Valley
John Hudson	Buffalo
Louise Ivory	Buffalo
Helen Janaro	Hannawa Falls
Bruce Weiner & Karen	
Johnson-Weiner	Canton
Eugene &	
Mary Jones	Potsdam
Ruth Kantell	Suffern
Phyllis Kapelewski	Latham
Frank Kearing	Parishville
Doreen LaRock	Gouverneur
Carol Lawrence	Canton
Eileen & Sal Marchese	Bardonia

Dominick Martino	Flushing
Laura Mason	Brooklyn
Denisen McIntyre	New York
Randy & Cindy Miller	Potsdam
Benjamin & Sandra	
Miller	Norwood
Anne Mitchell	New York
Sheila Wells & Robert	
Munro	Ogdensburg
Janet Nadler	Mechanicville
Bessie Page	Colton
Pat Perry	Canton
Joan Quasar	Massena
Jackie Rohr	Gouverneur
Edith Sayre	Bedford Hills
Susan Schrader	Fort Covington
Anne Scuderi	Rome
Jane Segelken	Ithaca
Robert Sinacore	Slingerlands
Mary Jane Spiak	Troy
Joanne Steele	Saint Remy
Esther Stern	Brooklyn
Kim Swire	Clifton Park
Karen Vincek	Albany
L.A. Wager	Ogdensburg
Daniel Joseph	
Washburn	Ogdensburg
James &	
Jennifer Whitaker	Buffalo
Grace White	Suffern
Dolores Wilkenson	
Jacobs	Buffalo
Sylvia Williams	Corona
Lois Wilson	Glenmont
Stephanie Kossin	
Wolos	Alpaus
Gertrude Wood	Gouverneur

New Lifetime Members:

Marion Fox	Flushing
Lowell Green	Bronx
Phyllis Kapelewski	Latham
Carolyn D. Parker	Bronx

*Thank-you for your support of
NY StateWide Senior
Action Council.
Your support is critical to
achieving our goals for this
year and the future.*

New Organization Members:

Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations of NYC
Delaware County Senior Council
Parishville Hilltoppers Senior Citizens Club
Senior Service Centers of the Albany Area, Inc.
St. Regis Mohawk Senior Citizens, Inc.
Senior Citizens Center of Saratoga Springs
Workers United— New York
United University Professions COARM

Contributors to the Rose Kryzak Fund:

Priscilla Bassett	Grahamsville
Muriel Beach	New York
Ruth Carrington	Potsdam
Franklin & Linda Clark	Williamson
Edith Dressler	Flushing
Anne & Sidney Emerman	New York
Marion Fox	Flushing
Lisa Freeman	Fairfield
Douglas Gleason	Theresa
Abdul Hakim	Woodside
Mario Henry	Flushing
Ruby Hodge	Brooklyn
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Jack Kupferman	New York
Susanne Maloy	Ithaca
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Gerda Mansell	Cheektowaga
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Masters	Canton
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Sharon Murray-Cohen	Kingston
Harriet Myers	Lawrence
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Sigilfredo Roman	Bronx
Lani Sanjek	New York
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Anne Scuderi	Rome
Doris Smith	Moravia
Anna Stellwag	Orangeburg
Dick & Sherry Watson	Hammond
Darlene White	Madrid
Linda Wilkinson	Potsdam
Cora Young	New York

Senior Legislative Action Committee of
Sullivan County (SLAC)
Capital District Humanist Society
United University Professions COARM
StateWide Senior Action Council Rockland
Chapter Executive Committee

Membership Dues Application

If there is an asterisk (*) next to your name on the mailing label you currently owe your 2014 dues.
Membership dues are for the calendar year – January 1 – December 31.

STATE WIDE

New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.
275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210 • (518) 436-1006 • Fax (518) 436-7642
www.nysenior.org

By joining StateWide, you can have an impact on state and federal issues of importance to older New Yorkers. You can also help spur your peers to become more knowledgeable about issues including Medicare, Social Security, prescription drugs, long-term care, patient's rights and NYS budget issues.

StateWide Senior Action is a not-for-profit, grassroots, advocacy organization of older New Yorkers, founded in 1972. With your membership, you will receive *Senior Action News*, information about our annual conference, local meetings and more! Updates are available on the Web at: www.nysenior.org.

Yes, Count me in! I want to join New York Senior Action Council.

Name: _____

(If Couple membership, please include both names)

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____ Chapter (if known): _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Affiliated Organization (if any): _____

Membership Categories

- ◆ Individual Membership - \$15.00/year
 - ◆ Couple Membership - \$20.00/year
 - ◆ Lifetime Membership/Individual - \$150.00
 - ◆ Lifetime Membership/Couple - \$200.00
 - ◆ Organizational Membership - \$75.00/year
 - ◆ Your organization will receive 20 copies of *Senior Action News*.
- I am a: New Member Renewing Member

Additionally, I would like to make a contribution of \$ _____ to the Rose Kryzak Legacy Fund to assist StateWide's efforts in forwarding senior advocacy across New York State.

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____ Make checks payable to: **NY StateWide**

Senior Action Council, Inc.

sp12news

Please return this form, along with payment to: **New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.**
275 State Street Albany, NY 12210

STATE WIDE

New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.
275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210 • (518) 436-1006 • Fax (518) 436-7642
www.nysenior.org

Our State Bill Tracker is updated monthly and posted to our website www.nysenior.org.
If you would like a copy mailed to you, please call our office.



SAVE the DATE

NY StateWide Senior Action Council
Annual Convention

at the

Holiday Inn, Saratoga Springs, New York