

New York StateWide Senior Action Council

MEMBER UPDATE

Winter 2017



María Alvarez

A Time for StateWide Members & the Grassroots to Shine!

The beginning of 2017 marks a new Presidential term. This is also the time of year when we meet with our local elected

officials to advocate for the programs and ensure that New York's elders and their families continue to enjoy an affordable and dignified quality of life. While there may be many differences in thoughts and philosophies, we have always held the belief that the answer lies in community organizing:

- Reaching out to our neighbors
- Understanding the community needs
- Communicating with our policy makers to inform them not only about the problems, but about the possible solutions.

StateWide members have been successfully working this way for the past 45 years. However, with the growing 65+ population the stakes have become higher.

In the following pages you will find our analyses of the Governor's Budget Proposal for FY 2018 and the Federal Legislative updates on issues that concern seniors and their families. This information can serve as a resource to further our mission of ensuring a livable New York State. As always, we are here to support our members. Call us with any ideas, requests, or other information. We are looking forward to another successful year!

THIS IS OUR TIME TO SHINE! WE NEED YOUR HELP!

- Recruit new members.
- Strengthen our chapters.
- Participate in our activities.

**WE NEED
YOU**



StateWide members rallying to protect Social Security and Healthcare For All. (NYC, 1-13-2017)

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



Challenges to the Future of Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid and Aging Services

The new Administration is expected to release its first proposed budget in March. Until the details are available we must express our hope that the President honors his campaign promises to protect Medicare and Social Security. From the positions of his Cabinet nominees, and proposals already being discussed in Congress, we are genuinely concerned.

PROCESS The process being used to advance policy changes is part of the budget process known as “reconciliation”. Votes only require a simple majority; significant changes to important entitlement programs are likely to occur without the delay tactic of the filibuster that is a useful negotiating tool requiring 60 votes to pass the US Senate. Inclusion of entitlement reform in the budget process will allow those measures to pass the Senate with only 51 votes, all of which can come from the majority (Republican) party.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA) Both Houses of Congress & the Office of the President have committed to repealing the ACA. The advocates have demanded no repeal without a replacement bill at the same time. While we often think of the ACA as how uninsured people purchase insurance coverage, there are many policy provisions that are part of the ACA those that are enrolled in Medicare.

We urge the continuation of ACA provisions that improved Medicare by:

- Eliminating co-pays for preventive services
- Providing an Annual Wellness Visit
- Reducing drug costs by closing the coverage gap (donut hole); since 2010, Medicare enrollees have saved an average \$2,272 per person on prescription drugs.
- Improving care coordination; the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation was created in the ACA to test new ways of delivering care intended to improve quality while reducing the rate of growth in Medicare spending.
- Stabilizing the Medicare Trust Fund; while benefits expanded, cost savings resulted in improved solvency of the fund.
- Supporting Home & Community Based Services as an alternative to nursing home care.
- Funding Chronic Disease Self-Management and Falls Prevention programs.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA) The OAA provides the funding that County Offices for Aging rely upon to provide services for older residents. Even though there is increased need based on the aging of the population, funding has not increased. Advocates are requesting a 12% increase in OAA programs. Some programs never recovered from the loss of funding in the budget sequester cuts. Additional years of sequestration were postponed, but the sequestration moratorium expires for the federal fiscal year starting in October. If the cuts are part of a budget balancing mechanism, we urge the parity be maintained between defense and non-defense spending.

MEDICARE Proposals posed as ways to “help shore up Medicare for future generations” are actually cuts, some impacting current Medicare enrollees.

We oppose proposals that:

- ❑ Replace program benefits with premium support, also known as coupons or vouchers, giving each beneficiary a fixed-dollar payment to cover part of the cost of health insurance and enrollees would pay the difference between the voucher and the plan's premium. With the lowest utilizers using vouchers, traditional Medicare's risk pool would be negatively impacted, further compromising the fiscal stability of the Medicare Trust Fund.
- ❑ Increase the age of eligibility, paralleling the full retirement age under Social Security, leaving 65-67 year olds uninsured by Medicare.
- ❑ Increase out-of-pocket costs by establishing a single (Combined Part A & B) deductible as well as uniform 20 percent coinsurance, estimated to raise out-of-pocket costs for 35 % of Medicare beneficiaries.
- ❑ Shift costs from government to individuals, so that beneficiaries pay a larger percent of Medicare costs through increased premiums, deductibles and co-payments. Current costs to the average enrollee average 22% of Social Security income. Proposals under consideration could cost enrollees almost 50% of their Social Security.



MEDICAID AND FOOD STAMPS These vitally important entitlement programs guarantee that everyone who meets the income guidelines receive benefits. For many older NYers, Medicaid is the only source of payment for long term community home or nursing home care. **Proposals would restructure from an entitlement to a block grant, which could eliminate important consumer protections and coverage guarantees.** Additionally, federal funds to states in block grants are not projected to keep up with need, and this is a cost shift from federal funds to the state budget. (Last year, the House proposed a \$913 billion cut over 10 years.) The state would be allowed to cap enrollment or institute waiting lists, eliminating the guarantee of coverage.

SOCIAL SECURITY There are many threats to the promise of Social Security. House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Sam Johnson has introduced a bill that he claims would “save” Social Security — but its savings would come entirely from cutting vital benefits. Under his bill, 70% of beneficiaries would see an average 27% reduction in benefits. **We will oppose efforts to:**

- ❑ Raise the age for full benefits to age 69 and delay the option for early benefits.
- ❑ Privatize the benefits to allow individuals to invest their premium on Wall Street.
- ❑ Change the Cost of Living Adjustment to the Chained CPI, representing a cut in benefits for current recipients.
- ❑ Further reduce Social Security Administration services/office hours.



The state budget is expected to be adopted by April 1, 2017. The Governor's budget proposal for the NYS Office of Aging (NYSOFA) is the following:

StateWide's Contracts:

We provide Medicare and EPIC benefits counseling through the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program. The proposed funding level is the same as last year. However, our **Patients Rights Helpline would lose half of its funding** under the Governor's proposal.

ACTION: Urge Legislators to restore funding to this important program that allows us to staff a toll free hotline helping patients navigate the health insurance and health care delivery systems, empowering patients and family caregivers to uphold their rights.

Community Services for the Elderly:

CSE provides funding to the local Offices for Aging and allows flexibility so priority spending decisions can be made at the local level for programs such as :

- EISEP (Enhanced In-home Services)
- Meals
- Transportation
- Caregiver Supports
- Respite and other needs

The Governor has included funding at last year's level, but has removed needed language that assured the localities did not need to increase their required match to gain the additional \$3.5 million funding secured by the Legislature over the past two years. Additionally, the Governor has proposed to eliminate a distinct funding line for transportation and instead add the amount funded last year to the CSE budget. This would lose the importance of funding senior transportation and also newly require the localities to match funding by 25%.

ACTION: Eliminate local match requirements for CSE and transportation.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for NYSOFA funded direct care workers:

The Governor's budget has eliminated funding for the two percent COLA for NYSOFA funded direct care workers enacted in 2015. This represents a \$2 million savings to the General Fund.

ACTION: If program has been under-utilized the application process should be improved, or the funds reinvested into aging services.

NYConnects:

This program provides information and assistance for people that need long term services and support. The Governor proposes to shift funding from the state to the federal Balancing Incentive Program (BIP) and the Medicaid Global Cap, generating annual savings of \$3.4 million which the Governor claims will not affect existing services.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs):

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) are grant funded. The Governor proposes a cut to keep that funding at the 2015 level, eliminating \$700,000 additional funding appropriated by the Legislature for the NORC and Neighborhood NORCs in 2016. **ACTION: Restore the funding.**

NYSOFA budget changes (cont.)**Senior Centers:**

While this funding is not through NYSOFA, Title XX funds through the Office of Children & Families are critically important to fund senior centers, particularly in NYC and Buffalo. The Governor proposes redirecting \$27 million in Federal Title XX funds, which counties may currently use at their discretion, to instead exclusively fund child care.

ACTION: Restore the funding to the senior centers.

Other major issues that will impact older New Yorkers include:**Medicaid:**

Among the proposed changes to Medicaid are several that have been previously rejected by the Legislature:

- Restricts Managed Long Term Care enrollment to only individuals who are nursing home eligible
- Eliminates prescriber prevails for the dispensing of prescription drugs, except for mental health medications.
- Spousal Refusal: Prohibits Medicaid benefits for long-term care services to an applicant whose relative is refusing to contribute income or assets towards the cost of health care.

Protecting Vulnerable Adults from Financial Exploitation:

- Trains bank employees to recognize the signs of financial abuse and authorizing approved banks to place holds on potentially fraudulent transactions.
- Allows recoupment of stolen money of up to \$30,000 for from the crime victims' fund.

State Retiree Health Benefits:

These proposals shift costs from the state to individual retirees, and were proposed and rejected by the Legislature last year.

- Implement differential healthcare premium reimbursement for future retirees based on years of service
- Ceases reimbursement of Medicare Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount
- Freezes Medicare Part B reimbursement

Real Property Tax:

The Governor proposes requiring Enhanced STAR recipients to participate in the Income Verification Program (IVP) instead of allowing verification by the local assessor, beginning with final assessment rolls for 2018. Another proposal would allow localities to accept installment payments of taxes, starting January 1, 2019.

New Individual Members:

Yvonne Bristow	Baldwin
Mamie Buncamper	Brooklyn
Elaine Chapline	
Burns, PhD	Riverhead
Mavis Carter	Brooklyn
Nancy B. Castner	Brant Lake
Olga Chapman	Brooklyn
Barbara Crosier	Cohoes
Barbara Ehrenpreis	Jericho
Charles and Janet Fischer	Pearl River
David Fonseca	Albany
Jim & Judy Fraley	Ogdensburg
Frances Gerber	Brooklyn
Betty Gifford	Watertown
Hazel Grant	Brooklyn
Jane Hill	Malone
Michelle Hobart	Watertown

Harrison Ewing & Sylvia Hough	Bloomington
Janet Howells	Saratoga Springs
Pat Lightbody	Berne
Tamie MacDonald	Delhi
Carl Matice	Canton
K.J. McIntyre	Kingston
Linda Miller	Delmar
Zoe Moffitt	Cottkill
Henry Moss	Bronx
Mary Frances Moss	Bronx
Nguy Nu	Bronx
Mamie Partee	Brooklyn
Mary Ellen Ryall	Saratoga Springs
Kenneth & Susan Scott	Malone
Becky & Erwin Selleck	Heuvelton
Isabelle Sherman-Matice	Canton

Deidre Skinner	Chateaugay
Amanda Smith	Watertown
Mary Sowell	Belleville
Esther Surovell	New York
Brittni Switser	Rensselaer
Kay Walton	Canton
Barbara Weber	Tappan
Lawrence Williams	Malone
Deb Williams	Cohoes

New Lifetime Members:

Seretha Alexander	Brooklyn
Catherine Bouchard	Whitestone
Georgianna Chin	Manhattan
Hon. Thomas P. DiNapoli	Great Neck
Suleika Cabrera	
Drinane	Brooklyn
Olivia V. Livingstone	St. Albans

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 budget issues. 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.

NYS Home Care Crisis Campaign

Along with Mercy Care of the Adirondacks and the Franklin County Office for the Aging,



StateWide is leading a coalition of over 100 groups around the state calling attention to the shortage of home care workers, regardless of funding source.

We have learned that there are older residents who are approved for hours of care, either through Medicare, Medicaid or EISEP, who are not able to receive the benefit due to a shortage of staff.

This is making it even more difficult to address waiting lists for services and has prolonged hospital and nursing home discharges, and has forced many to give up their independence. StateWide is working hard to raise this issue within the budget negotiations to ensure adequate wages and recruitment and retention incentives for the home care workforce. If you know of anyone that has a problem related to a lack of home care, or if you would like to join our coalition, please call us!



1-800-333-4374



Yes! I want my experience to count.

I want to join New York StateWide Senior Action Council.

Check box:

- ☐ Individual Membership \$ 15/year
☐ Couple Membership \$ 20/year
☐ Lifetime Membership \$ 150/individual
☐ Lifetime Membership \$ 200/couple
☐ Organization Membership \$ 75/year

Check box:

- ☐ New Member
☐ Renewal
☐ Contribution \$ _____
☐ Rose Kryzak Legacy Fund \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

County _____ Affiliated Organization _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

You can contact us at **518-436-1006**.

Please make your check payable to: **NY StateWide Senior Action Council**

Send this form to: **NY StateWide Senior Action Council,
275 State Street, Albany, NY 12210**

All dues and contributions are tax deductible.

If there an asterisk (*) next to your name on your mailing label, you currently owe your 2017 dues.

Kryzak Fund Contributors:

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Barbara Boggs	New York
Yvonne Bristow	Baldwin
Jeannette Chappell	Auburn
Georgianna Chin	Manhattan
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Velma & Sandra Ward	Brooklyn
Linda Wilkinson	Potsdam
Lauryn Wilson	Bronx

New Organization Members:

Alzheimer's Association, NYC Chapter
 Senior Citizens Ctr of Saratoga County
 Catholic Charities Senior Support Services, Schenectady
 CWA 1118 Retirees, Albany
 Finger Lakes Independence Center, Ithaca
 Northern Regional Center for Independent Living, Watertown

STATE WIDE

New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.

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www.nysenior.org

Upcoming Patient Advocates Program Telephone Teach-ins: 10 AM to 11 AM

Dial-in Number: 1-712-832-8300

Password: 6258645



March 28

Assistance from the NYS Attorney General for Seniors with Health Care Concerns

April 25

Mental Health Needs of Older Persons and How to Get Help

May 23

Prevention and Assistance Programs for Older Persons with HIV/AIDS

June 27

Home Care Agency Program to Screen for Sepsis

More information about each upcoming session will be posted on our Web site, www.nysenior.org



NY STATEWIDE SENIOR ACTION COUNCIL

Annual Convention **October 10-12, 2017**

Holiday Inn, Saratoga Springs, New York