

# New York StateWide Senior Action Council

# MEMBER UPDATE

Spring 2018



María Alvarez

## **Legislature Continues Funding StateWide's Managed Care Counseling Program & Increases Funding to Patient Rights Helpline for FY 2019**

It is with great excitement that we announce that funding for StateWide's Patient Rights Helpline increased by 100% for SFY 2019. We want to thank our members for their commitment in visiting and calling the elected officials requesting the much-needed increase for our programs. We also wish to thank the Governor as well as the NYS Assembly & Senate for recognizing the value that our programs bring in assisting clients, caregivers and professionals and identifying emerging trends in the health and aging arenas which inform policy makers on the effects of their work.

Each year StateWide reaches over 1.2 million older New Yorkers, their caregivers, and other professionals providing assistance in matters concerning health insurance and patient rights. In the course of our work, we identify trends, find out how certain policies are affecting the consumers, and we learn about other issues and programs with which we can assist the general public.

We try to reach as many people as possible through our helplines, in the community, at health fairs, forums, workshops, and through our telephone teach-ins. The Board of Directors and chapter members around the state volunteer their time to disseminate information and help their peers.

During our Annual Convention our membership convenes to hear the latest information regarding issues affecting the elderly. And during this period our members review what StateWide stands for and on which aspects of senior living we should be concentrating, to fulfill our mission of improving the quality of life of New York State's elders.

Our work has been the impetus behind programs such as: the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC), the New York Observation Status Law, Safe Patient Handling, the Patient Bill of Rights, and other policies that keep seniors living and thriving in the community.

The extra funding that we have received will be used to expand our capacity and ensure that New York's elderly continue to enjoy an improved quality of life in their golden years.

We want to thank all of you for your support. It is only through the efforts of our growing membership that we can accomplish our mission. We hope to see you in Saratoga Springs in Oct for our Annual Convention!

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

## President Proposes to Undo Budget Gains

In December, Congress adopted a tax bill that mostly favored the ultra-rich and in so doing, created an almost \$2 billion deficit. The inflated deficit, created by Congress, has now created a crisis in budgeting that they claim justifies proposed cuts to social safety net programs and earned benefits such as Social Security and Medicare. It should be noted that Social Security is not funded through the federal budget, and therefore should be immune to budget cutting. However, there are powerful forces that have been aiming to destruct Social Security and Medicare, sometimes slyly calling their proposals efforts to “save” the programs for future generations.

In March, Congress ignored the President’s budget proposal and funded needed aging programs, and increased funding for some.

### INCREASED

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Congregate & Home-Delivered Nutrition Programs
- Section 202 Housing for the Elderly
- Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Elder Justice Initiative
- Community Development Block Grant
- Social Security Administration (SSA) administrative funding
- Medicare State Health Insurance Program (NYS HIICAP)
- Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Elder Justice Initiative

### MAINTAINED FUNDING

- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Chronic Disease Self-Management Education

**In spite of these gains, the House Republican Study Committee calls for massive cuts to Social Security and Medicare, including:**

- Raising both the Social Security retirement age and the Medicare eligibility age to 70
- Using the chained Consumer Price Index (CPI) to prevent Social Security benefits from keeping up with inflation (resulting in a cut in Cost of Living Adjustments for current and future seniors.)
- Beginning Medicare’s destruction by partially privatizing it and increasing premium costs

The White House has continued to propose cuts that will need Congressional approval before implementation, including:

- Rescinding funding already enacted, including the Medicare Innovation Fund.
- Proposing HUD changes that would raise tenant rent contribution from 30 percent of adjusted income to 35 percent of gross income.
- \$266 billion in cuts to Medicare.
- Freezing most funding under the Older Americans Act.
- Cutting Medicaid by \$1.1 trillion over 10 years.
- Cuts of \$72 billion over 10 years to Supplemental Security Income programs and Social Security Disability Insurance programs.



**Seniors must stay informed and fight back against any attempts to “save” programs by cutting benefits.**

## State Budget Addresses Aging Concerns

The NYS Assembly and Senate were able to negotiate a budget agreement with Governor Cuomo that provided for some increases in services for older residents and modified some of the Governor's earlier proposals.

### HOMECARE

StateWide has been leading a coalition of concerned seniors, advocates, senior service providers and agencies concerned about the shortage of home care workers.

This shortage is apparent throughout the state and regardless of the form of payment. We are pleased to see that the Department of Health, in consultation with the Rural Health Council, will conduct a study of home and community-based services in rural areas of the State.



### EXPANDED IN-HOME SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY (EISEP)

The Governor had proposed to reduce funding for local office of aging services by \$875,000, funding that mostly supported the EISEP program. EISEP provides non-medical care at home for older residents whose income is above the qualifications for Medicaid. The Legislature restored that \$875,000 and added an additional \$1,375,000 to the Community Services for the Elderly (CSE) program.



### ELDER ABUSE

The Legislature restored full funding to the Elder Abuse Education and Outreach and expands the operation hours of Adult Protective Services until 8PM on weekdays.

## INCREASED FUNDING FOR NY STATEWIDE SENIOR ACTION COUNCIL'S PR HELPLINE

This program allows StateWide to empower patients and family caregivers to uphold their rights and provide education through community forums and our Telephone Teach Ins, monthly calls on trending topics open to all. The Governor had proposed to cut 1/2 of our program's funding. The Legislature rejected the Governor's cut and increased the budget over last year by 100%. Our Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program maintained the current level of funding. Thank you to all our members who called or wrote their state representatives to support our programs!



**NEW YORK CONNECTS** funding had been moved to the Department of Health (DOH) budget in 2017, creating uncertainty in the amount that would be allocated through the NYS Office for Aging. This year's budget provides funding in the NYSOFA budget for this one stop service for finding out about long term care services and supports.

## STATE RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

The Legislature rejected the Governor's proposal to eliminate reimbursement for Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) as a state employee retirement health benefit. The Legislature also rejected the Governor's proposal to permanently cap reimbursement for the Medicare Part B premium at 2018 levels.



## MEDICAID

The Medicaid budget:



- Improves multi-agency use of telehealth through Medicaid reimbursement for services.
- Expands the number of Medicaid Assisted Living beds, with priority for funding going to those counties with one or fewer providers currently, to establish 1,000 new assisted living program beds in underserved areas. Adds a permanent new process for the DOH to authorize additional beds.
- Increases the number of Medicaid covered physical therapy visits to 40 per year, and keeps the therapy caps for speech and occupational therapy at 20 visits per year for each.
- Requires a continuous 120 days of community-based services for Medicaid Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) eligibility, while grandfathering in current enrollees.
- Excludes Medicaid enrollees who have more than 3 months of residence in a nursing home from participating in a MLTC program, leaving care coordination to nursing home staff.
- Restricts MLTC enrollees from changing plans after initial enrollment, allowing only for a change in plan within 90 days of enrollment and one additional change per 12 month period for good cause.
- Places limitations on the contracting between MLTC insurers and home care agencies, to be further explored by the



DOH to maximize continuity of care and requires licensed home care agencies to register annually with the DOH.

- Increases Medicaid rates for Hospice services by 10%.
- Requires licensed home care agencies to provide DOH with Medicaid cost reports.
- Provides Medicaid rate increases to enhanced safety net hospitals.
- Provides more transparency in prescription drug costs by prohibiting Pharmacy Benefit Managers from restricting pharmacy disclosure of the cost of prescriptions and alternatives.

**Current law stays in place, as the Legislature has rejected the Governor's proposals that would have:**

- Eliminated Medicaid prescriber prevails provisions.
- Transferred the MLTC and Adult Day health care transportation to a centralized state manager.
- Limited coverage on Medicaid payments for Over the Counter drugs.
- Eliminated the right of a spouse of a Medicaid enrollee to refuse to have their income included in calculations for qualifying.
- Reduced the spousal impoverishment levels; the community spouse's resources continue to be up to \$74,820.
- Raised the minimum Uniform Assessment System score for MLTC eligibility.

**ECONOMIC SECURITY**

The budget created the NYS Secure Choice Savings Program, allowing workers to choose to create a payroll deduction for retirement savings. Employers would have to opt in, and would not add any contribution.

**REAL PROPERTY TAXES-STAR**

- The Legislature rejected the Governor's proposal to hold future STAR benefits at 2017-18 levels.
- The Legislature agreed with the Governor's proposal to require Enhanced STAR recipients to participate in the STAR Income Verification Program (IVP) administered by the Department of Taxation and Finance to verify their adjusted gross income (AGI) but requires local assessors to provide assistance upon request.

**There is much more policy work to be done in the weeks to come. The Legislature is expected to recess on June 20<sup>th</sup>.**



## Two elections this year for leadership roles in NY StateWide Senior Action Council.

**1. STATEWIDE BOARD OFFICERS**

- The Board's Nominating Committee has been soliciting nominees to propose a slate of officers to the membership.
- The election takes place at our Convention, October 9, in Saratoga Springs. If you are interested in running for office, or would like to nominate someone, please contact our main office at 800-333-4374 by June 15.

**2. REGIONAL ELECTIONS FOR STATEWIDE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Mail ballot Fall 2018*

- Each Region will elect 4 Directors and 2 Alternates to represent them on the StateWide Board of Directors.
- Two members who are elected to this position will serve a two year term from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2020.
- If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors or would like to nominate someone from your Chapter, please contact StateWide's main office at 1-800-333-4374 for information on how to reach the Regional Nominating Committee.



## NYS Medicare Savings Programs & Spousal Refusal

You're told your income is too high to qualify for a Medicare Savings Program (MSP) in New York State, don't give up!

New York State is one of only three states where "spousal refusal" is a legally valid MSP planning tool that can be used to lower the income considered for MSP eligibility.

### You should be asking yourself 3 questions right now:

1. What is a Medicare Savings Program?
2. What is spousal refusal?
3. Who do I contact about spousal refusal in my county?

### What is a Medicare Savings Program?

- Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) help eligible Medicare enrollees to meet some or all of their cost-sharing obligations under Medicare.
- Your Medicare Part B premium will be paid for you and you will be automatically enrolled into the Extra Help program that helps pay your Medicare Part D prescription drug plan premium, deductible, and co-payments.
- Eligibility for MSP in NY State is determined by income - not assets or resources.

### What is Spousal Refusal?

- Spousal refusal is a strategy to help people with higher incomes access Medicaid and/or MSP. When a couple's joint income makes the applying spouse ineligible for MSP,

spousal refusal can be used to lower the income that is considered.

- The non-applying spouse can sign and submit a statement, along with the MSP application, saying he/she cannot contribute toward the applying spouse's medical expenses and support.
- With spousal refusal, Medicaid will count only the income of the spouse applying for MSP, as though he or she is single.

### Where can I get a spousal refusal form in my county?

- In NYC, the Spousal Refusal form and MSP or Medicaid application is submitted to the Human Resources Administration (HRA) office. The Spousal Refusal form is available online: <http://www.wnyc.com/health/download/66/>
- In upstate counties, the Spousal Refusal form and MSP or Medicaid application is submitted to the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) office.
- Find out first, if the LDSS has a specific spousal refusal form they use, or if the HRA NYC form can be used as a template, or if some other kind of written statement would suffice.



**If you have more questions,  
please call StateWide's Helpline  
1-800-333-4374.**

**October 9-11, 2018 in Saratoga Springs, NY**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Circle One: Package Option (from below) A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ *If you are not a member and would like to join now, add \$20 to your registration\**

If registering for a double room, preferred Room-mate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Circle Lunch and Dinner Choice: (Breakfasts are buffet style—no choice needed)

Lunch Wed. - Pasta Primavera

Chef Salad

Dinner Wed. - Pork Loin

Fish

Mushroom Ravioli

## PACKAGE PRICING

	Member	Non-member
FULL Package <b>A</b> : Single, 2 nights, + opening day reception and 4 meals	\$430/person	\$490/person
FULL Package <b>B</b> : Double, 2 nights, + opening day reception and 4 meals	\$290/person	\$340/person
Package <b>C</b> : Single, Tuesday night hotel, + opening reception, Weds. bkfst, lunch	\$250/person	\$310/person
Package <b>D</b> : Double, Tuesday night hotel, +opening reception, Weds. bkfst, lunch	\$180/person	\$250/person
Package <b>E</b> : Single, Wednesday night hotel, + Weds. lunch, dinner & Thurs bkfst	\$260/person	\$330/person
Package <b>F</b> : Double, Wednesday night hotel, + Weds. Lunch, dinner & Thurs bkfst	\$205/person	\$265/person

## COMMUTERS

<b>FULL Package G</b> : 3 days, reception & 4 meals	\$175	\$225
Package <b>H</b> : Tuesday, with reception	\$30	\$60
Package <b>I</b> : Wednesday, 2 meals (lunch, dinner)	\$100	\$150
Package <b>J</b> : Wednesday, lunch	\$50	\$100
Package <b>K</b> : Wednesday Awards, dinner only	\$50	\$50

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** Please return this form with accompanying check to the Albany office by **September 14, 2018**. Registrations received after September 14 will have a \$20 surcharge applied. Questions, call us anytime at **518-703-2617**.

**HOTEL INFORMATION:** Holiday Inn Saratoga Springs, NY, 232 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866  
Phone: 1-518-584-4550, website: [www.holidayinn.com](http://www.holidayinn.com)

Hotel Accommodations Included in Package Pricing Registration. StateWide will make your reservation.

**\*If you are not a member of StateWide, become a 2018 member today for \$20.  
You will receive the discounted Member price for this event.**





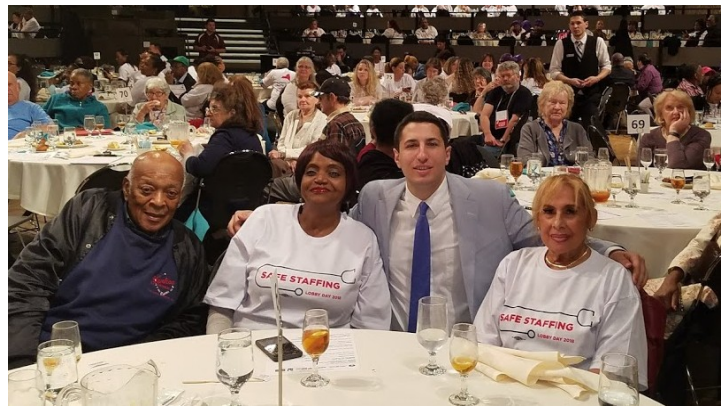
## Senior Grassroots Advocacy Day

On May 8, 2018, over 400 seniors from all over the state joined nurses unions, including CWA, NYSNA, NYSUT, and PEF to advocate for **Safe Nursing Ratios in Hospitals and Nursing Homes**. Seniors also advocated for passage of the New York Health Bill (Single Payer—Improved Medicare for All), and our state legislative agenda. Our members visited with their elected officials, and gathered information to take home and share with their chapters.



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







# 2018 Award Nomination Form

Each year, NY StateWide Senior Action Council awards outstanding seniors for their leadership to improve the lives of older residents:

## Rose Kryzak Advocacy Award

An advocate and a leader on public policy issues locally and at the state level to promote the well being of older New Yorkers.

## Paul E. Harenberg Award

Trains and educate others about important issues and programs benefitting seniors.

## Robert E. O'Donnell Memorial Award

Promotes the growth and development of the NY StateWide Senior Action Council.

## Michael Burgess Award

Promotes the senior movement through social activism, leadership, and initiatives conducive to the improvement of the quality of life of older New Yorkers.

***Please Check one. Use one form per nominee:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Rose Kryzak Advocacy Award

\_\_\_\_\_ Paul E. Harenberg Award

\_\_\_\_\_ Robert E. O'Donnell Memorial Award

\_\_\_\_\_ Michael Burgess Award

### **Nominee (person being nominated)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

StateWide Chapter or County of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### **Nominator (person filling out form)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

StateWide Chapter or County of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**On a separate piece of paper please provide a statement of why the nominee is deserving of this award and include a description of his or her activities.**

All forms must be postmarked by June 18, 2018. Any StateWide member in good standing can make a nomination. Nominees must be at least 55 years of age, in good standing and have been a StateWide member for at least one year. **You can mail, fax or email your nomination form. Fax: (518) 436-7642 Email: statewide4@gmail.com; Address: SWSAC Awards Committee, 275 State Street, Albany NY 12210**



**Yes! I want my experience to count.**

**I want to join NY StateWide Senior Action Council.**

Check box:

- ☐ Individual Membership \$ 20/year  
☐ Couple Membership \$ 25/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 \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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.**

## New Individual Members:

Eileen Bosworth	Albany
Edith Brown	Buffalo
Christine Coatney	Kingston
Joy Shipley Cooke	New York
Walter Dunn	Blue Point
Dimitri and Gai	
Galitzine	Kingston
Kimberly Garrett	Schenectady
Homer Harshberger	Derby
Elaine Lawrence	Kingston
Antonia Manuela	New York
Thomas McKellop	Auburn
Lydia Mellos	Kingston
Madeleine Miller	Kingston
Elnora Nicholson	Saratoga Springs
Irwin Richards	Brooklyn
Luciana Rougier	Brooklyn
Douglas Ruffin	Buffalo
Ramona Scott	Brooklyn
Rebecca Sherwood	Ithaca
Beatrice Eva Storms	Canton
Colette Swietnicki	New York
Etan Ben Ami and	
Amy Ruth Tobol	Brooklyn
Susan Tucker	New York
Carol Voelger	Syosset

## New Lifetime Members:

Blaire Bertaccini	New York
Sarah Jane & Jim Blake	Brooktondale
Anthony Chestnut &	
Ben Cashaw	Buffalo

## New Lifetime Members (cont.)

Annella Johnson	Brooklyn
Wilma & Jonathan	
Lawrence	Brooktondale
Donna McClellan	Brooklyn
Laura McCord-Mann	Brooklyn
Robert Reynolds	Johnson City
Myrna Stephens	Bronx

## Kryzak Fund Contributors:

Priscilla Bassett	Grahamsville
Patricia Binzer, EdD	Albany
Mamie Buncamper	Brooklyn
Paul & Phyllis Cooney	Albany
Deborah & Jorge Escobar	Schenectady
MaryAnn Fastook	Brooklyn
Kathleen Fleming	Ballston Lake
Richard & Brenda Gibbs	St. Albans
Warren Gilfus	Auburn
Homer Harshberger	Derby
Annella Johnson	Brooklyn
Ruth & Thomas Jordan	Pine Bush
David Keefe	Mineola
Robert & Barbara Koffsky	Beacon
Julia Kosikowski	Youngstown
Elizabeth Kryzak	Flushing
Maureen Miller	E. Elmhurst
Wilma & Jonathan	
Lawrence	Brooktondale
Laura Mason	Brooklyn
Karen Miller	Kingston
Maureen Miller	E. Elmhurst

## Kryzak Fund (cont.):

Eileen Moran	Bayside
Henry & Frances Moss	Bronx
Ruth Pannell	Brooklyn
Louis Peters	Brooklyn
Leola Phillips	New York
Elise Rackmill	New York
Sigilfredo Roman	Bronx
Amy Rothstein	Pine Plains
Kathleen and Herb	
Sanders	Albany
Nelsa Selover	Aurora
Katie Stella Sheldon	Copenhagen
Annabelle Staber	Kingston
Joanne Steele	Saint Remy
Etan Ben-Ami &	
Amy Ruth Tobol	Brooklyn
Kenneth Traub	Rochester
Gloria Vanterpool	New York
Carol Voelger	Syosset
Lauryn Wilson	Bronx
Donna Yannazzone	Haverstraw
Richard & Lucy Kryzak	
Zaslow	Forest Hills

## New Organization Members:

Alzheimer's Assoc., NYS Coalition, Albany  
 Dekalb-Hermon Senior Citizens, Richville  
 Gouverneur Senior Citizens, Heuvelton  
 Senior Legislative Action Committee of  
 Sullivan County, Kiamesha Lake



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

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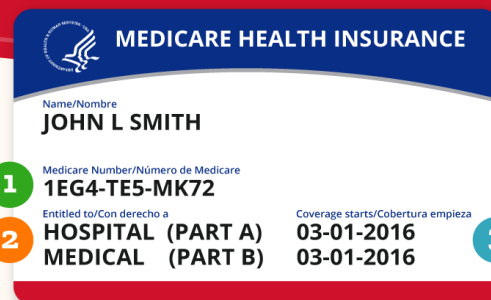
**Our State Bill Tracker is updated monthly and posted to our website [www.nysenior.org](http://www.nysenior.org).  
If you would like a copy mailed to you, please call our office, 518-436-1006.**

On April 1, 2018, new Medicare cards started to be mailed to Medicare enrollees. The first batch was sent to those who were newly enrolled, followed by mailings to others. The new card will delete the use of the Social Security Number as your health insurance claim number. A random number will be assigned.

Hold onto your current Medicare card and continue to use it until your new card arrives in the mail. You do not have to do anything to request the new card. AND beware of scams – do not give out any information if someone calls you asking for it because of the new cards.

**If you have questions, call StateWide at 1-800-333-4374.**

## Understanding Your Medicare Card



1

Your new Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) will replace your Social Security Number.

2

These are the parts of Medicare coverage that you have.

3

These are the dates when your coverage starts with this card.