

New York StateWide Senior Action Council

MEMBER UPDATE

September 2020



María Alvarez

Turning Lemons into Lemonade – StateWide Membership Adapts & Holds 2020 Virtual Annual Convention

During the six months since the COVID-19 pandemic upended our very existence, **our members** continue with their involvement in **important issues**.

Our helplines are busy as we continue our work in **coalitions, online events, and advocacy**.

In other words, at StateWide, it's business as usual! (With a twist!)

As such, we will rely on our members, as always, to help us make our **2020 Virtual Annual Convention** a success!

This year:

- **StateWide's Virtual Annual 2020 Convention will be held over ZOOM.**
- Participants may join **by computer** or **by telephone**.
- All **2020 paid members** will attend the convention at **no cost**. There will be a charge of **\$150 for those who are not members** wishing to attend.
- **Each chapter** will **designate 1** delegate to cast their vote **at events that require voting**.

Elections & Adoption of our State and Federal Legislative Agendas

- **Elections** for our Executive Board will be held on **October 13** – ***all Paid Members are welcome to attend.***
- There will be a **Town Hall** Meeting on **September 29** – ***all Paid Members are welcome to attend.***
- The **Adoption of the State & Federal Agendas** will take place on **October 9** – ***all Paid Members are welcome to attend.***
- The **workshops and presentations** will take place on: **October 13—15, open for all members & non-members.**

Registration is required whether you are a member of StateWide or not.

You will find the schedule of events and registration within this newsletter.



So let's pour ourselves a tall glass of lemonade - we deserve it!

We look forward to seeing all of you at the Annual Convention!

- *María Alvarez,*
Executive Director

Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374

Coronavirus Relief

It's all about coronavirus, wherever you look. And that's particularly true of the negotiations in Congress over legislation. All types of issues have been wrapped up in the COVID relief bills – so far there have been four bills enacted. The fifth bill was being negotiated as we went to press and has been named "HEROES" by the House of Representatives and "HEAL" by the Senate Majority Leader.

StateWide supports, at the minimum, ensuring federal funding for:

- State and local governments to offset the economic impact on budgets & taxpayers
- Virus testing and vaccine development
- Sufficient PPE (personal protective equipment) for essential and healthcare workers,
- Additional home and community based services (HCBS)
- Increased SNAP and Medicaid funding
- The security of the November elections
- Ensuring the US mail.

Social Security & Medicare Trust Funds



During early negotiations on the next relief bill, the White House insisted on a payroll tax holiday as economic stimulus. This would temporarily eliminate the FICA tax for both employer and employee contributions. This proposal would have done nothing to help those who are without a job, and it would hurt Medicare and Social Security by defunding these earned benefits. Remember, Social Security does **not** contribute to the federal deficit, it is not

funded by budget appropriations. The payroll tax holiday was rejected by both Houses of Congress but the President has penned an Executive Order to do this, which is beyond his authority. However, the Senate has included a dangerous proposal in its negotiations, called the Trust Act. This would create a secretive process to propose cuts to your benefits and it would change the way Congress deals with the Trust Funds to make it easier to get the votes to defund them.

The message is the same as always – preserve and improve Medicare & Social Security – don't cut our earned benefits!

Take a proactive stance – tell your Congressmembers that you want Improved Benefits!

Improved Medicare for All

Insurance profiteers and payment denials and delays must be eliminated from our health care system & reinvested in health care instead of stockholders dividends. It is time to end enrollees out of pocket costs and improve benefits. Medicare should cover full dental, vision, hearing and long term care.

Improving Social Security

The pandemic has created economic havoc, and aggregate wages are predicted to drop dramatically for 2020. This impacts Social Security benefit calculations, reducing benefits for all who turn 60 this year (born in 1960). Those affected will receive a significantly reduced benefit for their

entire life unless this is fixed. The Social Security COVID-19 Correction and Equity Act (H.R.7499) fixes this problem & increases overall benefits by 2%. Encourage your Representative to co-sponsor the bill, and thank Reps. Nadler, Suozzi, Higgins & Morelle for already doing so if you live in their districts.

State Legislature Takes Action

The State Legislature met in abbreviated sessions due to the need to meet virtually, yet there was a lot of legislative action after the budget was adopted.

- In May, they held a hearing exploring solutions to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on minority communities.
- In June, StateWide co-hosted a forum with Senate Aging Committee Chair Rachel May on concerns regarding care in long term care facilities.
- During July, the Legislative returned for a full session
- During August, the Legislature held hearings on how the pandemic has affected New Yorkers. StateWide testified on the devastating impact on hospital patients, nursing home residents and their families.

We send our sympathy to those that have suffered and those that have lost family members. Many channeled their grief into action by sharing their stories with us to be included in our testimony. Stories came from every area of the state and a unifying message was that nursing homes faced quality concerns prior to the pandemic,

including failures to maintain infection control and insufficient staffing. Both of these pre-pandemic failures contributed to the high rate of infection and deaths in nursing homes and bring into question the state oversight that is supposed to protect residents' rights to quality & dignified care.

Another failure is that most weren't aware that there is a long term care ombudsman to help residents & families uphold their rights.



It is clear that for years before COVID-19 arose, our nursing homes were severely understaffed and underfunded, Health Dept. inspection staff was understaffed, and enforcement was lax. The virus has made these problems clearer & much more severe.

- Assembly Health Committee Chair
Richard Gottfried

The loss of life among nursing home residents in New York and nationwide has been one of the greatest tragedies of this pandemic. We are holding these hearings in order to get answers for the grieving families and to insure that policies are in place moving forward to prevent further tragedy, while also defending the rights and the quality of life of those who depend on long-term care.

- Senator Aging Committee Chair
Rachel May



Newly Passed Legislation Awaiting the Governor's Signature

- Permanently bans sale of pre-need funeral insurance.
- Bans toxic chemicals in food packaging containers.
- Protects seniors when lenders attempt to foreclose on a home with a reverse mortgage.
- Requires notice of ombudsman for Medicaid Managed Care.
- Increases seats on the Public Health and Health Planning Councils to ensure appointment of consumer.
- Requires the state to work toward expansion of broadband and fiber optic services.
- Allows supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits for online groceries.
- Improves voting by authorizing automatic voter enrollment, improving process for requesting and counting absentee ballots, & allows for absentee ballots to avoid risk of contracting contagious disease.
- Ensures the confidentiality of information collected through contact tracing for COVID-19.
- Requires hazardous wastes produced from oil and natural gas activities to be subject to the requirements for treatment of hazardous wastes.



New Laws

- Moratorium on evictions during the pandemic & prohibits utility (water, phone, electricity, gas) termination during pandemics/emergencies.
- Allows online request for absentee ballot during pandemic.
- Protects patients by determining if family caregivers are capable of maintaining central venous lines at home prior to a discharge into the care of an "informal caregiver."
- Authorizes licensed pharmacists to administer a COVID-19 vaccine when available.
- Prohibits price gouging for essential goods & supplies, including medical supplies.
- Requires the department of health to conduct a study on the health impacts of COVID-19 on minorities.
- Requires nursing homes to submit an annual pandemic plan.
- Improves whistleblower protection for health care employees.
- COVID-19 contact tracers be representative of the diversity of the communities.
- Prospectively changes parts of the ban on lawsuits against health providers during the COVID-19 emergency.



Adopting the 2021 Federal & State Legislative Priorities



Your Public Policy Committee has been meeting monthly since Convention 2019 to implement the current legislative priorities and to review changes needed for 2021.

One of their challenges was to propose how to manage an open forum for members and member representation to adopt the necessary documents on legislative priorities for 2021 when we are not physically together at our Annual Convention.

After re-examining the current priorities, the Committee determined that we do not need many changes this year to enable us to stay on top of emerging issues. This is because our membership has always been so forward thinking that we already have policy platforms in place to envision the laws needed to make our state and federal governments work better for older residents.

Our work to implement our priorities is clear. On the state level we need to continue to:

1. Be strong advocates on issues related to disaster preparedness/public health emergencies, access to home care and quality of care in hospitals and nursing homes.
2. Assure access to broadband, especially with the move toward increased reliance on telemedicine.
3. The solution for improving health systems & access continues to be support for the New York Health Act.

On the federal level we need to continue to assert support for Social Security and Medicare, including Improved Medicare for All. Our current agenda already provides platforms on these issues and more.

The plans are:

Town Hall Meeting

The traditional Convention Speak Out on Public Policy matters will be on September 29th from 10 AM to Noon.

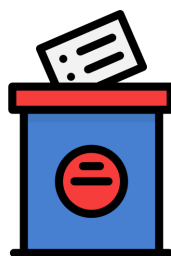


Share your concerns. Speak Up about the issues important to you. This session is open to all members; use the Convention registration form

to reserve your space. You will be able to video chat or call in. After this session, speak with your Chapter leaders to ensure that your point of view is conveyed to the Chapter's delegate to the voting session on the Legislative Priorities.

Voting to Adopt 2021 Legislative Priorities

Voting will be done on a delegate system on October 9th from Noon – 2 PM.



Each Chapter will appoint one delegate to review, respond and vote on the draft 2021 State & Federal Legislative Priorities on behalf of the membership. The drafts have been developed by the Public Policy Committee and shared with Chapter presidents and board members and can be viewed on our web page. Members without internet access can call StateWide by September 21st to request a copy be mailed to them. Delegates will debate and vote on behalf of the membership. Members can observe the proceedings by registering for this convention event.

Anticipated Lower Out-of-Pocket Costs for Insulin

Starting Jan 1, 2021, Medicare beneficiaries will have new Part D plan choices offering insulin co-payments of no more than \$35 for a 30 days' supply.



These choices will apply to Part D and Medicare Advantage plans & cover insulin purchased by mail or locally. Plans must cover vial and pen dosage forms for rapid-acting, short-acting, intermediate-acting, and long-acting insulins.

Currently, Part D costs for insulin may include a \$435 deductible, and changing co-payment amounts during the year. A capped co-payment of \$35 for a 30 days' supply of insulin will make out-of-pocket costs more affordable and budgeting more predictable for Medicare beneficiaries and allow them to continue their established insulin regimens.

Getting these savings is not automatic

This new benefit is voluntary for drug manufacturers, plans & beneficiaries and is limited to applicable drugs that are, or contain, a drug classified as insulin.

Beneficiaries will need to pay attention and actively opt in to receive the benefits!

During the annual open enrollment from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, 2020, anyone who is insulin dependent & enrolled in Medicare Part D will need to ensure their plan is participating in the Medicare Part D benefit to receive the \$35 monthly out of pocket cap.

For more information, call our Medicare Helpline at 800-333-4374



New York StateWide Senior Action Council 50th Anniversary Committee to Kick Off Fundraising Activities

New York StateWide Senior Action Council turns 50 in the year 2022 & members formed a **50th Anniversary Committee** with the objective of raising funds and starting to celebrate the organization's achievements over the past half century.

The kick-off event is a **StateWide 50-50 for StateWide's 50th Money Raffle**.

Fifty percent of the monies taken in will go to the winner and 50% will go towards our 50th Anniversary Celebration. **Each chapter is being asked to sell tickets.**

Tickets will sell as follows:

- \$5 (five dollars) for 7 (seven) tickets or \$10 (ten dollars) for 20 (twenty) tickets.
- The raffle will end December 1, 2020.

If you want to purchase tickets or request tickets to sell, please contact your local Chapter President, or call StateWide at 800-333-4374.

Thank you for your support of this fundraiser.

Your 50th Anniversary Committee:

Helen Sanders (Committee Chair)

Darlene White (Committee Treasurer)

Kathy Lyman (Committee Secretary)

Merlene Bell (Western NY)

Ann Converso (Western NY)

Barbara McBurnie (North Country)

Sharon Murray-Cohen (Ulster County)

Claire O'Brien (Ulster County)

Kitty Vetter (Hudson Valley)

Mario Henry (NYC Chapter)

STATEWIDE 2020 CONVENTION SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, SEPT 29

10 AM - Noon

Public Policy Issues Speak Out

(Members Only)

Share your concerns. Speak Up about the issues that are important to you. This event replaces our annual Convention Town Hall meeting.

FRIDAY, OCT 9

Noon – 2 PM *(Members Only)*

Each Chapter will have an appointed delegate to review, respond and vote on the draft 2021 State & Federal Legislative Priorities.

The draft has been shared with Chapter presidents and board members and can be viewed on our web page. Members can call by September 21 to request a copy mailed to them.

Delegates will debate and vote on behalf of the membership. Members can observe the proceedings by registering for this convention event.

2020 CONVENTION

TUESDAY, OCT 13

9 -10 AM *(Members Only)*

Election of Officers

Members will vote on a slate of officers for the board of directors. See pages 8-10 for the slate. (Members can vote during this session after registering for this convention event.)

10 AM - Noon

- Convening
- President's Welcome
- Executive Director's report
- Plenary Speaker (to be announced)

BREAK (1 hour)

1 PM—2:15 PM

Benefits Panel

Hear the latest updates on Medicare, EPIC, and your rights to appeal

BREAK (15 min)

2:30 PM – 4 PM

Protecting Yourself & Others from Scams

Hear from the NYS Attorney General's office and StateWide's Senior Medicare Patrol.

WEDNESDAY, OCT 14

12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Reimaging Our Health Systems

Learn how the health care system works now and vision how it can meet our future needs. Will there be enough hospital & long term care beds and health and home care workers? How will services be accessed in the community, what is telemedicine's future?

BREAK (15 min)

2:45 PM - 4:45 PM

Improving Consumer Protections

How to reduce the impact of health, racial and economic disparities. What can be done to reduce personal medical debt? Will banks be part of the solution or the problem?

THURSDAY, OCT 15

1 PM - 4 PM

Public Policy Solutions

Hear from advocates on state and federal issues, from protecting Social Security and Medicare to ensuring the state has sufficient resources to deliver needed services.

Legislators discuss their priorities on a panel featuring the state health and aging committees.

4 PM - 4:30 PM

Closing remarks

Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374

SLATE OF NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

Annual Convention October 13, 2020

The following members in good standing of New York StateWide Senior Action Council have been nominated to serve as Officers of the Board of Directors. Officers will be elected to serve a two-year term, from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022, under the Bylaws adopted at the Annual Convention on October 9, 2012. Brief biographies of the nominees follow below.

OFFICER	NOMINEE	REGION
PRESIDENT	Mario C. Henry (Queens County)	New York City
1st VICE PRESIDENT	Ann Converso (Erie County)	Western NY
2nd VICE PRESIDENT	Susan Schrader (Franklin County)	North Country
SECRETARY	Wilma Lawrence (Tompkins County)	Finger Lakes
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Nelsa Selover (Cayuga County)	Finger Lakes
TREASURER	Robert Sinacore (Albany County)	Capital
ASSISTANT TREASURER	Sharon Murray-Cohen (Ulster County)	Hudson Valley

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Nominations Committee, *Susan Schrader (Chair)*

BIOGRAPHIES OF NOMINEES

President: MARIO CATTANO HENRY (Queens Co., NEW YORK CITY REGION)

Mario Henry is our current President. He joined New York StateWide Senior Action Council in 2010. He served as Secretary for the New York City Chapter (2012-2015), Chapter President (2016-2018) and is the current Chapter Treasurer. Mario was elected Secretary to StateWide's Board of Directors in 2016. He was elected to the position of the President of the StateWide Board of Directors in 2018. He received the Rose Kryzak Advocacy Award in 2013 as an outstanding advocate on issues of greatest concern to seniors. Mario worked at the NYS Department of Labor from 1971 to his retirement in 2005. He continues to be active with his union, the Public Employees Federation, as a professional staff retiree. Born and bred in NYC, he attended school in Queens and graduated from Queens College (CUNY) with a Master's Degree in Political Science in 1971. The defining condition of his life for over 40 years was his mother's struggle with Multiple Sclerosis. From age 9, family caregiving became a focus of his life and that experience shaped his understanding of the importance of 'safety net' programs for survival and his political views.

First Vice President: ANN CONVERSO (Erie Co., WESTERN NY REGION)

Ann Converso is our current First Vice President. Ann has attended StateWide's Convention and Grassroots Advocacy Day at the State Capitol. She is a registered nurse worked for 30-plus years as an acute medical/surgical and an I.V. therapy nurse at the VA Western New York Healthcare System at Buffalo. She has retired from many leadership positions in nurses unions both on the state and federal levels where she was active in advocacy for legislation and nurse and patient rights. She has also worked in the Buffalo office of the Communications Workers of America District 1. Ann continues to be a strong advocate for safe patient handling policies and safe nurse to patient staffing ratios. Ann is also active in the Western NY Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans.



Second Vice President: SUSAN SCHRADER (Franklin Co., NORTH COUNTRY REGION)

Susan Schrader is our current Second Vice President. She is a lifelong resident of Northern New York and is active in the North Country Chapter of NY Statewide Senior Action Council. For the past 16 years, she has been involved with assisting the seniors in Franklin County. She was RSVP director for four years and then appointed as Executive Director of the Association of Senior Citizens until October of 2016. She is presently Program Director of the Community Friendship Volunteer Program through the Community Health Center of the North Country. The CFVP extends friendship, spiritual care, assistance, and health education to older adults living in their own homes. Susan was appointed to the Alice Hyde Hospital/ University of Vermont Medical Center Board of Directors for Five Years. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Red Cross and the Industrial Development Agency of Franklin County. She served on the Advisory Council to the Franklin County Office for the Aging for five years and still attend their meetings. Susan is a certified REST (respite, education, support tools) trainer providing respite for individuals and their families.



Secretary: WILMA LAWRENCE (Tompkins Co., FINGER LAKES REGION)

Wilma Lawrence has been a member of StateWide since 2016. Wilma is President of the Tompkins County Chapter of StateWide and a member of the Board of Directors. She is a retired engineer and has held various leadership positions in community organizations including secretary positions and projects requiring technical writing. Wilma has spearheaded the Age Friendly movement in her community and is deeply committed to ensuring responsible access to telecommunications for all communities (including rural communities) in New York State.

Assistant Secretary: NELSA SELOVER (Cayuga Co., FINGER LAKES REGION)

Nelsa Selover is our current Assistant Secretary. Nelsa has been a member of NYSWSAC since 1994; She has been a board member of our organization since 2005. Nelsa is retired as Director of the Cayuga County Office for the Aging 13 years ago. She has been a Medical Social Worker in Nursing Home for 14 years and serves on several Community Boards related to senior services including:

- Bluefield Manor Retirement Community (President) (Since 1999)
- Boyle Senior Center (President) (Since 1994)
- Cayuga County Council of Senior Citizens/Finger Lake Chapter of NYSW (Since 2005)
- Melrose Park Senior Club Member (10 years) Governing Committee - 1 year.
- Human Services Coalition of Cayuga County (Life Time Member)

She is a Volunteer Mentor with the S.C.O.R.E (Senior Core of Retired Executives), Auburn Chapter and Lay reader and chalice bearer at her church. As a mother of two and grandmother of four, she considers this her most important role.



Treasurer: ROBERT (Bob) SINACORE (Albany County, CAPITAL REGION)

Bob Sinacore is our current Treasurer. Bob is a longtime resident of Albany and served as the Vice President of the Albany chapter of Statewide when it was formed, then was elected President. He's had a longtime interest in services for seniors both in his career in State government and as a retiree. He worked with seniors as an outreach worker with Jewish Family Services, and is volunteering with Community Caregivers. In addition, he's been involved with advocacy for seniors at the State Capitol. He is currently serving as a regional representative to the Board of Directors of NYSWSAC. Bob would like to continue with his desire to improve & expand services for seniors.



Assistant Treasurer: SHARON MURRAY-COHEN (Ulster Co., HUDSON VALLEY REGION)

Sharon Murray Cohen is our current Assistant Treasurer and has served as Treasurer for New York StateWide Senior Action Council since 2012. She has been instrumental in facilitating meetings in Kingston for StateWide members who have formed a new Ulster County Chapter.

She brings a strong background in community organizing, program development, grant writing and fund development. She is the Executive Director of Jewish Family Services of Ulster County, a non-sectarian agency that provides a wide array of services to individuals in the latter half of their lives. As a Licensed Masters Level Social Worker, Sharon has spent her professional career working in human services, health care and education. She developed and implemented housing and support services programs for special needs populations. She is skilled at matching community needs to funding sources.

Sharon has taught Social Policy Courses on both a graduate and undergraduate level at Mount Saint Mary College, Marist, Adelphi, and Fordham. She developed a very successful Grant Writing Certificate program for Mount Saint Mary College.

MEMBERSHIP & CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Register today for our 2020 Virtual Convention: Turning Lemons into Lemonade

PAID MEMBERS CAN REGISTER FOR OUR CONVENTION AT NO COST. REGISTER BY OCT 2, 2020

Not a member yet? **JOIN NOW** and **RESERVE YOUR SPOT** for Convention.

Sign me up for ☐ Membership ☐ Convention Registration (**no fee for members**)

☐ Non Member Convention Registration \$150

FOR MEMBERSHIP

Check box:

- ☐ Individual Membership \$20/year
- ☐ Couple Membership \$25/year
- ☐ Lifetime Membership \$150/year
- ☐ Lifetime Membership (Couple) \$200/year
- ☐ Organization Membership* \$75/year

(*includes 5 convention registrations, but only one vote.)

FOR ALL REGISTERING FOR CONVENTION:

Reserve my space for: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Legislative Issues Speak Out
(members only) **Sept 29, 10 AM to 12 PM**
- ☐ Legislative Priorities Delegate Vote
(members only) **Oct 9, 12 PM to 2 PM**
- ☐ Vote on Officers
(members only) **Oct 13, 9 AM to 10 AM**
- ☐ 1 or more Convention sessions
(everyone) **Oct 13 - Oct 15**

 **Convention registration is required whether you are a StateWide member or non-member.**

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Organization _____

- ☐ I will be joining the convention over the internet using a tablet, computer or smartphone
- ☐ I will be joining the convention by phone. Phone number I will be using _____

Enclosed is \$____ payable by check to NY StateWide Senior Action Council

Mail c/o Gail Myers, 46 Commonwealth Dr, Glenmont NY 12077 Questions 518-703-2617

NEW MEMBERS:

Ellen Brickman	Albany	Marc & Shari
Paul Fairand	Ithaca	Nadelman Wantaugh
Robin Fenley	Staten Island	Ellie Santoro Ithaca
Jim Fouratt	New York	Susan Soboroff Trumansburg
Cindy Harrington	Clifton Park	
Kathleen Martin	Albany	

THANK-YOU TO ALL OF OUR NEWEST
MEMBERS AND CONTRIBUTORS!

NEW LIFETIME MEMBERS:

Ramona Scott Brooklyn

KRYZAK FUND CONTRIBUTORS

Maria Alvarez	Queens
Ruth Pannell	Brooklyn
Kenneth Traub	Rochester

Medicare, Medicare Fraud and Patient's Rights Helpline 800-333-4374

REGISTER TODAY for our 2020 Virtual Convention. **No charge for members.**
Access by computer or phone. Pre-registration required by October 2.

Contact Tracers Capitalize on COVID Confusion

Scammers are masquerading as contact tracers, and it's smart to verify calls or texts before giving out any information.

A legitimate tracer may ask:

- For your name and address.
 - For your date of birth — counter with your age, rather than giving out that key piece of identity data.
 - For your whereabouts on certain dates, errands you ran, stores or businesses you visited, etc.
 - Questions about your health & whether you've experienced any symptoms.
- Ask for a financial account number or request payment.
 - Tell you who among your contacts has tested positive for COVID-19.
 - Ask you to fill out an online application to be a contact tracer, too.

But a legitimate contact tracer will not:

- Ask for your Medicare, Medicaid or insurance policy number.
- Inquire about your immigration status.
- Ask for your Social Security number.



For more information call your NYS Senior Medicare Patrol at **800-333-4374** or visit **our website at nysenior.org.**

This project was supported, in part by grant number 90MPPG0010-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.

