



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging First of the Month Update – April 2, 2016

Coalition Day at the Legislature – Don't forget to mark your calendar for this important Day that will be held on May 10 at the NC General Assembly. Coalition members are reminded to return the registration form for the Day sent to you on March 17 by Theresa Johnson, Chair of the committee coordinating this event. Questions about the Day at the Legislature can be directed to Theresa at ncaduldayservices@gmail.com.

Older Americans Act Reauthorization Passes U.S. House – As reported to you earlier, the House passed S. 192, the Older American Act Reauthorization Act, on March 21 by unanimous voice vote. Thank you again to all Coalition members who contacted your member of Congress in support of the reauthorization vote. The Senate, which had previously passed its version of the Act, is expected to adopt the amended bill and send it to the President in April.

News on the Election/Political Front – The redrawn congressional districts for the state have resulted in seventy-six candidates filing for the 13 U.S. House seats. This is about double the number who had filed to run in the old districts. Primary elections are set for June 7.

After a three-judge panel ruled in February that Associate Justice for the State Supreme Court Bob Edmonds could not just face a retention election (an up-or-down vote without any opposition) under a law passed by the General Assembly last year, three people have filed to challenge him for his seat on the Court. To read more about this and the Congressional races, see the article by Matthew Burns with @NCCapitol at <http://www.wral.com/congressional-primary-attracts-stampede-of-candidates/15600102/>.

On a related note, the redrawn Congressional maps has resulted in NC A&T State University in Greensboro, the nation's largest Historically Black College and University, to be split into two Congressional Districts – the 6th and 13th. Concerns have been expressed that this split will dilute the voting power of the campus community and cause Election Day confusion at the polls.

A seat will be open on the State Court of Appeals when Judge Martha Greer steps down to go into private practice. Greer was first elected to the appellate court in 2002. She has two years remaining in her second eight-year term.

State Senator Josh Stein, a Democrat representing Wake County, resigned from the Senate on March 21 to focus efforts on his election bid for the Attorney General's office.

Joint Legislative Oversight Committees Meetings Scheduled – The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice have both scheduled meetings on April 12 to review their recommendations for the short legislative session which begins on April 25. The Health and Human Services Committee will meet in the morning and the Medicaid/N.C. Health Choice Committee will meet that afternoon.

Alzheimer’s Facts and Figures for 2016 Released – On March 30, the Alzheimer’s Association released its 2016 Facts and Figures. To see a copy of this full report, go to http://www.alz.org/documents_custom/2016-facts-and-figures.pdf. An infographic on key facts from the report can be found at <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/153c8cb71e6a1fcb?projector=1>. According to the report, over 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s and as many as 16 million will have the disease by 2050. The cost of caring for those with Alzheimer’s and other dementias is estimated at \$236 billion in 2016. This will increase to \$1.1 trillion (in today’s dollars) by mid-century. Nearly one in every three seniors who dies each year has Alzheimer’s or another dementia. In North Carolina, the number of persons with Alzheimer’s is expected to increase from 160,000 this year to 210,000 in 2025.

In conjunction with the release of the report from the Alzheimer’s Association, National Public Radio (NPR) ran a story about the **big financial costs of caring for someone with Alzheimer’s** (<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/03/30/472295791/big-financial-costs-are-part-of-alzheimers-toll-on-families>). The story highlighted the challenges faced by a family in Kentucky. In the NPR story, the following statistics were cited about the financial costs of caring for someone with Alzheimer’s (based on a survey of more than 3,500 Americans contributing to the care of someone with Alzheimer’s):

- Friends and family spent, on average, more than \$5,000 a year of their own money on the expenses of their loved one with dementia, ranging from food to adult diapers.
- More than one-third of these contributors to care who had jobs had to reduce their hours or quit.
- To make ends meet, about 13% had to raise money by selling personal belongings, such as a car.
- Nearly half of the care contributors surveyed had to dip into their savings or retirement funds.

Medicaid Reform Public Hearings Continue – Public hearings on the state’s proposal for moving forward on Medicaid reform began in Raleigh on March 30 and continue across the state through April 18. To find out more about the reform proposal and to get information about the public hearings and how to also submit written comments, go to <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/nc-medicaid-reform>. See this report from the News and Observer’s Under the Dome (<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article69140682.html>) about what the public had to say at the hearing in Raleigh.

Federal Report Says Medicaid Expansion Could Help Mentally Ill – A report (<https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/benefits-medicaid-expansion-behavioral-health>) released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on March 28 shows that states can greatly improve access to behavioral health services for residents by expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. According to the report, in 2014, about 144,000 North Carolinians who were uninsured but would have been eligible for Medicaid under an expansion had a mental health or substance abuse disorder. Read more about this as reported by Lynn Bonner with the News and Observer at <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article68682292.html>.

Plan for Reducing Number of Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) Proposed – On March 17, NC Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Rick Brajer announced the Department's proposal for consolidating the state's eight local behavioral health management entities known as LME/MCOs into four larger organizations divided roughly along geographic lines. To read about this proposal and reaction from mental health advocates and providers see this article by Rosa Hoban with NC Health News: <http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2016/03/18/mental-health-community-reacts-to-consolidation-push/>.

Retirement Confidence Study Results Released – Each year the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) conducts a retirement confidence study. According to the latest study, only 21% of Americans are “very confident” they will ever have enough money for retirement. EBRI found that 46% of retirees have retired earlier than planned, usually due to health issues, but also because of layoffs or discontentment with their jobs. Also, 40% of people are saving so little they will run out of money in retirement. According to Craig Copeland, senior researcher at EBRI, a major problem for Americans is that only about half have retirement savings plans like a 401 (k) plan at work, and those without a plan at work do a poor job of saving. To read more about the study, go to: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/business/article68584192.html>.

2016 Falls Prevention Day Announced – The National Council on Aging has announced that the 9th annual Falls Prevention Awareness Day will be observed on September 22, 2016, the first day of fall. This special day raises awareness about how to prevent fall related injuries among older adults. The theme for this year is “Ready, Steady, Balance: Prevent Falls 2016.” To find out more information and to learn about resources go to <https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/fall-prevention/falls-prevention-awareness-day/?utm>.

Nominations Being Accepted for Healthy People 2030 Advisory Committee – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has announced the establishment of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2030 and invites nominations for membership. Nominations are due by April 18, 2016. [Submit a nomination by April 18](#) | [Learn more about Healthy People](#)

Other Reports and Resources of Interest:

- From National Public Radio – “**Health Care for Seniors Often Goes Beyond Their Desires**” (<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/03/08/469538699/health-care-for-seniors-often-goes-beyond-their-desires>).
- From NBC News – “**Americans Mix It Up Too Much with Drugs, Study Finds**” (<http://www.nbcnews.com/health/aging/americans-mix-it-too-much-drugs-study-finds-n542781>).
- From National Public Radio – “**Physicians Group Calls on Government to Rein in Drug Prices**” (<http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/03/29/471867695/physician-group-calls-on-government-to-rein-in-drug-prices>).
- From Journal of the American Medical Association – “**Quantity and Quality of Life: Duties of Care in Life-Limiting Illness**” (<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=2482308>).

Sympathy is extended to long-time aging advocate Dot Crawford from Franklin, N.C. on the death of her husband, John, on March 30. John, who was 97 years old, was Dot’s constant companion at aging meetings ranging from the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging to the Senior Tar Heel Legislature to the AARP Advocacy Council. He could always be counted on to give everyone he met a piece of his signature hard candy. He and Dot were married for 74 years. The funeral for John will be on April 3 at 2:30 p.m. at Franklin Church of Christ. Visitation will be from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Church.

State Representative Ralph Johnson, a first term Democrat from Greensboro, **died on March 15** from a stroke he suffered in February. He was elected in 2014 to fill the seat left when Rep. Alma Adams ran for Congress. Condolences are extended to the Johnson family.

April Coalition on Aging Meeting – Mark your calendar. The Coalition meeting for the month of April will be held on Friday, April 22, in the first floor conference room at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services located in Taylor Hall on the Dorothea Dix campus in Raleigh (693 Palmer Drive). An agenda for the meeting will be available in mid-April.

Next Coalition on Aging Membership – Membership in the Coalition on Aging is open to any agency, organization, group, or individual who is interested in aging in North Carolina. To renew your membership or to sign up for the first time, go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx>.

Have questions about the Coalition on Aging or need more information, check out our website at <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/>.