



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging August Update – August 14, 2017

Just Because It's Summer Doesn't Mean Politics Takes a Back Seat: From Raleigh to Washington, plenty of things have gone on these last several weeks to keep those who “follow” political developments glued to their electronic devices while they attempt to squeeze in vacation time, and there are no signs that things will ease up anytime soon.

The North Carolina General Assembly has already reconvened in session since adjourning the long legislative session and more sessions are scheduled in the weeks to come. House and Senate Redistricting Committee members are hard at work redrawing NC legislative district lines with the help of a high profile national mapmaking consultant who now calls Raleigh home. Governor Roy Cooper has signaled he does not like the new state budget and is suing over funding for education and the environment and the spending of federal grants that total nearly \$1 billion. On the federal level, Presidential actions aside, the Senate failed in its efforts to repeal and replace (at least parts of) the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Congress is moving forward to develop and approve a budget to fund the federal government after September 30.

Many of the recent actions at both the state and federal levels and the decisions that will be made in the next five to six weeks will have a profound impact on every person in North Carolina, including older adults. As deliberations move forward on many fronts, aging advocates will likely need to make their voices heard with our elected officials. Fasten your seat belts and stay tuned for what promises to be a busy time with a good share of drama.

Legislative District Maps: On July 31, a panel of three federal judges ordered state legislators to redraw maps by September 1 for legislative districts that have been ruled to be unconstitutional racial gerrymanders. In the same ruling, the judges ruled that North Carolina will not have to have special elections in 2017 in the new state legislative districts. An article about the ruling is [here](#). Last week House and Senate Redistricting Committee members approved the criteria that will be used to develop the new maps. One of the criteria approved is to allow the use of election data to achieve political goals, but considering voters' race is a criteria that will not be considered. To read more about the complete criteria, click [here](#). Drafts of the new maps should be ready for the public to view in about two weeks. A vote on the revised maps is expected on the floors of the House and Senate on August 24.

What's Ahead for the ACA? Following the failure of the Senate efforts last month to repeal and replace the ACA, Senate leaders have signaled that they want to just drop the issue – at least for now. According to a [poll](#) released by the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation last week, the majority of the American public is in agreement with stopping efforts to scuttle the ACA and they want the President and congressional Republicans to start trying to make it more effective. According to the Kaiser poll, about 4 in 5 people want the Trump administration to take actions that help the ACA function properly, rather than trying to undermine it. The President has suggested that he will just let Obamacare crash on its own. Numerous political cartoons such as the one below have taken aim at that.



Top of the Ticket cartoon (David Horsey / Los Angeles Times)

Efforts suggested by the President and his administration have included steps like halting subsidies to insurers who reduce out-of-pocket health costs for millions of consumers, curbing outreach programs that encourage people to buy coverage, and not enforcing the tax penalty the statute imposes on those who remain uninsured. Only 3 in 10 people in the poll want President Trump and Republicans to continue their drive to repeal and replace the ACA.

Efforts continue by the hard-line conservatives with the House Freedom Caucus to force a fresh House vote to revoke the ACA without an immediate replacement. On Friday, they filed a petition to force a vote if it is signed by 218 lawmakers. It seems unlikely enough signatures will be forthcoming because of the Republican divisions and the Democratic opposition.

So, for now the ACA remains the law of the land. It remains to be seen what future action Congress and the Trump administration will take in the months to come on this issue. To read more about the Kaiser poll and the politics behind the ACA votes, click [here](#).

Federal Budget Developments: The deadline for Congress to fund government programs for the next fiscal year which begins October 1 is fast approaching. With the attention focused on the ACA in July, the public's attention shifted away from budget deliberations. NCOA did a

[good summary](#) the end of July about where things stand in the budgeting process. As noted in the summary, Rep. David Price from our state offered an amendment during the Appropriation Committee debate on the Labor-HHS bill to restore funding for the Administration for Community Living programs that were proposed to be cut, including the SHIP (Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program). The amendment was not approved along party lines, but Labor-HHS Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) offered to work with colleagues to restore funding as the process moves forward.

State Health and Human Services Budget: In case you missed it, *NC Health News* has done a summary of provisions in the recently passed state budget for 2017 related to health and human services and compares what was passed with what was proposed by the House and Senate. To see a copy of the comparison document, click [here](#).

Lawsuit Over Medicaid Expansion in NC Dropped: In July, Senate leader Phil Berger and House Speaker Tim Moore announced that they have withdrawn their lawsuit challenging Governor Roy Cooper's attempt to expand the state's Medicaid program in the last days of the Obama presidency. Although there was extensive discussion between the Cooper administration and federal officials, the administration never actually submitted a plan to expand the Medicaid program to the Obama or Trump administrations. To read more on this, click [here](#).

State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Releases Medicaid Proposal: Last week DHHS released a report explaining how it wants the Medicaid program to look when a 2015 state law directing the reorganization of the program takes effect, possibly in July of 2019. The report calls for the integration of physical and mental health treatment more quickly than proposed and for expanding coverage to more of the working poor in the state. To read more about the proposal, click [here](#). DHHS is taking public comment on the proposal through September 8.

WRAL On the Record Show Focuses on How the Opioid Epidemic Touches Many Including Grandparents: This On the Record show which aired on August 5 on WRAL TV included a segment that featured a grandmother in Harnett County who is now raising her granddaughter due to the drug abuse of the child's mother. As a part of the program, information is shared about a grandparents' support group in Harnett County that is attended by the grandmother. The support group is a program of the Mid-Carolina Area Agency on Aging. There has been an increase in recent years in the number of grandparents across the state who are assuming the parenting responsibilities of their grandchildren due to drug use by the parents. Aging programs across the state are expanding program efforts to better support grandparents raising grandchildren. To see the WRAL On the Record show, click [here](#).

Additional Bills of Interest to Aging Advocates: In addition to the bills previously reported on that were passed in the 2017 state legislative session, two additional bills of note of special interest to older adults and aging advocates were approved. They are as follows:

- **Senate Bill 567** ([Reform/Correct/Wills and Trusts](#)) provides for the judicial reformation of wills to correct mistakes and the judicial modifications of wills to achieve the testator's tax objectives and revises the North Carolina Uniform Trust Code to achieve consistency in the reformation of trusts with in the reformation of trusts with the reformation of wills, as recommended by the General Statutes Commission.
- **House Bill 236** ([NC Administrative Office of the Courts Omnibus Bill](#)) among other things provides for the clerk to extend the time for filing inventory in the property of the deceased and amends how costs in administration of estates are assessed.

Division of Aging and Adult Services Seeks Awards Nominations: Each year, the NC Division of Aging and Adults Services presents three awards to recognize individuals, organizations, programs, and communities that have made significant contributions in support of the Division's efforts to enhance resources, services, and opportunities for our state's older citizens. The Division is now seeking nominations for the awards listed below until September 22, 2017.

- The Ewald W. Busse Award which recognizes an individual or organization that has had a significant impact on enhancing the health status of older North Carolinians through efforts to direct health related policies and/or to provide leadership in developing innovative solutions to health care problems.
- The George L. Maddox Award which recognizes an individual or organization in the state that has excelled in creative programming for older adults.
- The Ernest B. Messer Award which recognizes a community (a defined geographic area) in the state that has excelled in addressing the needs of its older citizens.

Questions about the nomination process can be directed to Mary Edwards at the Division of Aging and Adult Services at [\(919\) 855-3437](tel:9198553437) or Mary.Edwards@dhhs.nc.gov.

Investigative Series on Housing for Persons with Mental Illness: During the last week in July, *Carolina Public Press* released a four part series about housing for persons with mental illness in North Carolina. Much of the reporting for the series focused on the adult care home system in the state and the inspections system for homes. Click [here](#) to see the four part series (scroll to the bottom of the article for the links to the stories) and the response from the Executive Director of the NC Association of Long Term Care Facilities about the series. *Carolina Public Press* is a nonprofit online news service that provides Western North Carolina with in-depth and investigative reporting.

Medicare and Social Security Trustees 2017 Report: On July 13, the Medicare Trustees published their [annual report](#) on the Medicare trust fund solvency. The report predicts that Medicare will remain solvent through 2029 – a year later than the 2016 projections. This also allows the program to avoid triggering the establishment of the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) which is an Affordable Care Act provision to automatically curb Medicare costs

and is triggered if costs exceed a certain rate. The Social Security Trustees also [reported](#) that they estimate that the Social Security trust funds will remain solvent through 2024, the same timeline projected in last year's report, and that Social Security recipients will receive a 2.2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2018. This will be the largest increase since 2012 when the COLA rose 3.6%. Social Security recipients received no cost-of-living adjustment in 2016 and only a 0.3% increase in 2017.

News and Observer (N&O) Reorganizes Newsroom: Last week the *News and Observer* announced that it is shuffling its political reporters as a part of a newsroom reorganization. Paul A. "Andy" Specht is joining the paper's politics team as reporter for PolitiFact North Carolina. Specht previously covered Raleigh and Wake County government for the N&O. The previous PolitiFact reporter, Will Doran, will now cover politics with an emphasis on state employee issues, including the State Health Plan, benefits and pensions. Veteran political reporter Lynn Bonner will have an emphasis on social services and the safety net, including children's and family issues, services for the elderly and disabled, and the opioid epidemic. Courts reporter Anne Blythe will continue to cover safety and justice issues, including lawsuits involving state government. Doran, Blythe and Bonner will all cover the legislature and political campaigns. Longtime Wake County education reporter T. Keung Hui will now focus on state education policy. Richard Stradling, who had been the paper's deputy metro editor, will report on transportation issues. Brian Murphy will continue as the paper's Washington correspondent, and editor Jordan Schrader will remain as the political team's leader. Craig Jarvis, who had covered state politics, has been reassigned to cover real estate and retail news on the paper's growth team.

Call for Nominations for Pioneer Award: Last year the Coalition established a new award called the Pioneer Award to recognize individuals who have made long-time outstanding contributions to the field of aging in North Carolina. Nominations are now being accepted for this Award. Information about the Award and a nomination application is on the Coalition's [website](#). The deadline for submission of nominations is August 15. Last year's Award recipient, Dorothy Crawford from Macon County, recently celebrated her 99th birthday and continues to be active in aging issues in her county and region and on the state level. She sets a wonderful precedent for the Award.

Registration for Annual Meeting: The Coalition's annual meeting and luncheon will be on Friday, September 22, at the N.C. State University Club at 4200 Hillsborough Street in Raleigh (the same location as last year). Registration begins at 11:30 a.m. with the program starting at 12:00 noon. Registration can be completed [on-line](#) at the Coalition's website and payment made through PayPal on-line or the registration can be mailed to the Coalition's P.O. Box along with payment.

Dr. James H. Johnson, Jr. from the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, will be the guest speaker at the meeting. His presentation will be on "Bracing for the Silver Tsunami: Golden

Dividends and Strategic Business Opportunities.” Dr. Johnson is a much sought after presenter, and we are excited that he has agreed to be with us.



Dr. Johnson is the Business School’s William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor for Strategy and Entrepreneurship and the Director of the Urban Investment Strategies Center

August Coalition Meeting: The August Coalition meeting will be held on Friday, August 25, at 10:00 a.m. in room 104 of the Brown Building which is located at 801 Biggs Drive on the Dix Campus. This is the hearing room for the NC Division of Health Service Regulation. The program for the meeting will have a technology focus. Coalition member David Litman from the NC Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will share information about and demonstrate Computer Assisted Real-Time Translation (CART). CART is an example of how to make meetings accessible for people who are hard of hearing or late deafened by displaying spoken words on a screen for people to read as text. There will also be a presentation by staff from K4Connect which is a startup mission driven technology company in Raleigh that is developing technological advances and products that can help to enable older adults and persons living with disabilities to maintain their independence and to have a better quality of life. Scott Moody, the CEO for K4Connect was previously the co-founder, chairman and CEO of Authen Tec, the company that developed the technologies now at the foundation of the Touch ID in the Apple iOS products, and the only publicly traded company to be acquired by Apple. There will also be the usual updates, a report from the Workgroup on the Direction of the Coalition, and time for sharing by Coalition members.

The Brown Building is the third building on the right if you enter the Campus off of Goode Drive from Lake Wheeler Road. It is yellowish in color and has a large ramp in front of the building. Room 104 has an outside entrance on the left side of the building. Handicap parking is available in the lot adjacent to the building and handicap accessibility to the building is available via the front door using the ramp. Free parking is available on the street in front of the building or in the lot across the street. Click [here](#) to get directions and a map to the building. The Brown Building is number 17 on the map.

Notes and Updates

The **Credit for Caring Act (S. 1151/H.R. 2505)** has been introduced by Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Shelly Moore Capito (R-WV), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Representatives Tom Reed (R-NY) and Linda Sanchez (D-CA). The bill would provide a new, nonrefundable federal tax credit of up to \$3,000 to family caregivers to help address the financial challenges of caregiving and help working family caregivers remain employed. A family caregiver tax credit has strong support across party lines. A November 2016 AARP poll found that 87% of likely voters age 50 and older support a tax credit for working family caregivers.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina has announced that it is **lowering its 2018 rate increase request** for individual health insurance policies from 22.9% to 14.1%. In reducing the rate increase request, Blue Cross said that it had overestimated its medical expenses for 2018 at the time the request was submitted to the NC Department of Insurance in May.

According to a new survey of 148 large companies, the **cost of health care plans will grow 5% next year, to an average cost of \$14,000 per employee**. The increases were attributed largely to expensive specialty drugs and individuals with high medical costs. To learn more, click [here](#).

The Trump administration has **ended contracts with two companies** – Cognosante LLC and CSRA, Inc. – **that assisted with ACA enrollment** in 18 cities last year, including Charlotte. In addition to that, the number of days to enroll in an ACA plan has been cut half. Enrollment is now November 1 to December 15. Last year it extended through January. These two things could have the potential to greatly reduce the number of ACA enrollments in the state. North Carolina has consistently had one of the highest sign-up rates in the country.

According to the personal finance website WalletHub, **North Carolina is the fifth worst in 2017's Best and Worst States for Health Care**. The report compared all 50 states and Washington, D.C. on 35 standards measuring cost, accessibility and results in health care. The state came in next to last (50th) in health care cost, 44th in access and 36th in “outcomes” which considered mortality, disease, hospital visits, and immunization rates.

For about one in three adults who had chickenpox as a child will get the **shingles** which can affect your nerves and cause burning, shooting pain, tingling, and/or itching, as well as a rash and blisters. [Find out about symptoms, treatments, and the shingles vaccine](#) from the National Institute on Aging at NIH.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued a proposed rule that would allow nursing homes to insert **pre-dispute arbitration provisions** in a residency agreement and would allow nursing homes to require that residents and families sign the pre-dispute arbitration agreement in order to be admitted to the facility. CMS accepted public comment on this proposed rule through August 7.

President Trump has signed the **VA Choice and Quality Employment Act** which addresses a budget shortfall at the Department of Veteran Affairs that threatened medical care for thousands of veterans. The bill provides \$2.1 billion to continue funding the Veterans Choice Program which allows veterans to seek private care. Another \$1.8 billion will go to core VA health programs including 28 leases for new VA medical facilities. To learn more, click [here](#).

The U.S. Senate has passed legislation that aims to help terminally ill patients access experimental treatments under so-called “**right to try**” laws. The legislation from Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) would keep the federal government, including the Food and Drug Administration, from interfering when a terminally ill patient seeks access to experimental treatments that haven’t yet received FDA approval, subject to several specific conditions. To learn more, click [here](#).

Scientists estimate **frontotemporal disorders** (FTD) such as frontotemporal dementia, primary progressive aphasia, and movement disorders make up about 10% of all cases of dementia and are more likely to strike at a younger age. The [Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center](#), a service of the National Institute on Aging at NIH, has information about frontotemporal disorders and changes in the brain resulting from these disorders.

NCOA reports that according to Census data, more than 20 million Americans are veterans of foreign wars. Roughly half of those veterans (9.2 million) are aged 65 and older, including more than 1.3 million World War II veterans over the age of 85. NCOA recently did a blog post about **public and private benefits that can help veterans** afford to remain independent, healthy, and secure. To see the blog post, click [here](#).

The National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD) has published the [August 2017 Edition of the State Medicaid Integration Tracker](#). This is a monthly report summarizing state actions in Managed Long Term Services and Supports (MLTSS), as well as State Demonstrations to Integrate Care for Dual Eligible Individuals and other Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Initiatives.

Congressman David Price has announced that **Sawyer Hackett** has joined his staff as **communications director**. Most recently, Sawyer served as assistant press secretary in the Office of Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and on the national press advance team for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. Lawrence Kluttz, who has served as Price's communications director since 2014, will begin a new job as a speechwriter to the president of Duke University, Vincent Price, on August 10.

DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen has announced the addition of two new members to her senior leadership team. **Betsey Tilson**, who begins on August 14, **will serve jointly as State Health Director and the Department’s Chief Medical Officer**. She comes to DHHS from Community Care of Wake and Johnston Counties where she served as Medical Director. She also served as Chief Network Medical Director for Community Care of North Carolina. **Jay**

Ludlam, who starts on August 24, is an attorney and will serve as **Assistant Secretary for Medicaid Transformation**. He currently serves as Missouri's acting state Medicaid director.

Hank Bowers has been named the **new Assistant Director at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services** effective September 1. He has worked at the NC Division of Social Services for over 24 years in a variety of capacities including performance management, reporting and evaluation management, policy development, and program consultation. Prior to his work at the Division of Social Services, he worked for the Franklin County Department of Social Services as a social worker and services supervisor.

Jeff Horton has been named the **Executive Director of the NC Association of Long Term Care Facilities** effective August 1. Jeff had a long career with the NC Division of Health Service Regulation prior to joining the Association.

Nicolle Karim has been named as the **Interim Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) NC**.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina has selected **Dr. Patrick Conway** as their **Chief Executive** effective October 1. He replaces Brad Wilson who is retiring. Dr. Conway is the Deputy Administrator for Innovation and Quality at CMS and Director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

Chris Urso is **retiring from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services** the end of August. She is the Special Assistance Program Administrator for the Division.

NC Senate Leader Phil Berger has been **appointed to the executive committee of the Republican Legislative Campaign Committee** which helps Republicans win majorities in state legislatures.

Lance Robertson, Director of the Oklahoma Aging Services Division since 2007, has been **confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Aging and Administrator of the U.S. Administration for Community Living**.

Upcoming Meetings/Events (not previously reported)

August is National Immunization Month - Click [here](#) for helpful information about immunizations needed.

August 15, 2017 at 12:00 noon – **Crucial Conversation: The Silver Tsunami: What's on the Policy Horizon for North Carolina's Seniors?** – Center for Community Leadership Training Room at the Junior League of Raleigh Building (711 Hillsborough St.).

August 15, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. – **AARP Online Safety Workshop**. Learn how to secure your phone, increase your online safety, and recognize scams. Click [here](#) to register.

August 17, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. – Webinar on **Becoming an I&R Wizard: Identifying and Empowering Problem Callers**. Hosted by Alliance for Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). Click [here](#) to register.

August 17, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. – The Administration for Community Living has announced that Coverage to Care (C2C) has partnered with the Consumer Financial and Protection Bureau (CFPB) to host a **financial planning webinar that will focus on C2C’s newest resource Manage Your Health Care Costs**. [Register for the webinar](#). To learn more or download C2C resources, please visit go.cms.gov/c2c or email CoverageToCare@cms.hhs.gov.

September 19, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. – AARP NC hosts Frank Abagnate, author of Catch Me If You Can, as a part of the Fraud Watch series at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill, NC.

September 23, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. – **Alzheimer’s and Related Dementias Summit** at Pleasant Grove Church (1528 Davis Drive) in Cary, NC. Presented in partnership with the Center for Outreach in Alzheimer’s, Aging, and Community Health (COAACH).

October 24, 2017 – **2017 Alzheimer’s NC Dementia Caregiver Education Conference** at Haymount United Methodist Church (1700 Fort Bragg Road) in Fayetteville, NC.

November 5-8, 2017 – **Consumer Voice 41st annual conference** in Washington, D.C.

Check out the Coalition on Aging [website](#) for additional meetings and events.

Articles/Resources:

Resources recommended by Forever Curious which calls itself a labor of love by a group of librarians and educators seeking to curate the best educational resources and lesson plans for people of all ages. They seek to foster a love of lifelong learning that has kept all of us forever curious (<http://forevercurious.org/about/>):

[Legal Resources for Seniors](#)

[Veterans Benefits for Seniors](#) (click on state veterans benefits)

[Making the Move to Assisted Living](#)

[Keeping Seniors Safe While Remodeling](#)

[Disaster Preparedness for Seniors](#) (focuses on assistive technology protection)

[Advanced Care Planning](#)

[Home Accommodations for Seniors](#)

[Tips for Seniors to Declutter and Organize their Home](#)

[Elder Care Resources](#)

[Recent NPR Stories in Their Series on Aging](#) (numerous stories listed)

[Buying Health, Not Just Health Care](#) (Op-ed by Dr. Mandy Cohen)

[Caregiving and the Workplace: Employer Benchmarking Survey, July 2017](#)

[Dementia Caregiving in the U.S., February 2017](#)

[Midlife Cardiovascular Risk Factors May Increase Changes of Dementia](#)

[Fresh Produce for Rural Marts Funded Through Grants](#)

[Triangle Hospitals Among Nation's Best, Worst for Hip Replacement](#)

[NC GOP Will Stay Wrong on Medicaid Expansion](#)

[The Economy is Still All About- Who Else? - Boomers](#)

[Boomers 'Age' Census Stats](#)

[Triangle Seniors Win National Hoops Title](#) (at National Senior Games)

[Tapping the Creative Brain](#) (Participating in the Arts Can Help People with Alzheimer's ...)

[Glen Campbell's Alzheimer's Didn't Change Him](#)

[Taking Care of Aging Parents: The Legal and Financial Details You Need to Know](#)

[Black, Gay, and Gray: The Perils of Aging LGBTQ People of Color](#)

[Here's How Sleep Loss Can Affect Alzheimer's](#)

[Caregiving Is Hard Enough. Isolation Can Make It Unbearable](#)

[Loneliness A Bigger Killer Than Obesity, Say Researchers](#)

[How to Create a Safe "Aging in Place" Home](#)

[Reaction Time as Predictor of Mortality](#)

[Exercise: The Secret to Aging Slowly](#)

Submitting Information for Updates – If you have news or information on activities and events you would like to have included in an *Update* to Coalition members, please send details to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com. The Coalition also posts a master calendar of aging related events and activities on the Coalition's website.

Have questions about the Coalition on Aging or need more information, including information about joining the Coalition or renewing membership, please contact us at mmbethel72@gmail.com or check out our website at <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/>.