



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

**NC Coalition on Aging
February Update – February 19, 2018**

Change for February Coalition Meeting: As previously announced, the February Coalition on Aging meeting which will take place on Friday, February 23, at 10:00 a.m. will be held in the large conference room at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services located at 693 Palmer Drive (Taylor Hall) on the Dix campus in Raleigh. Our normal meeting location of the Brown Building on the Dix campus is not available for this meeting. The conference room in Taylor Hall is to the right after entering the main entrance to the building. Free parking is available adjacent to the building, and there is an elevator on the ground level of the building which provides access to the second floor where the conference room is located.

We are pleased that Jason Baisden, program officer at the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust will be the speaker for the meeting. He will share information about the Trust and its program areas of focus. Jason serves as the primary contact for grantees and potential grantees in the Western North Carolina region for the Trust's Health Improvement program area. He works with local partners in each county to leverage resources to improve the quality of life and health for low-income residents. Prior to joining the Trust, Jason served as the executive director of the North Carolina Association of Free Clinics (NCAFC), where he was responsible for leading a membership of over 82 free clinics as well as implementing NCAFC's strategic goals and its mission.



Jason Baisden, Program Officer
Kate B. Reynold Charitable Trust

Aging Subcommittee Meets – Recommends Continuation: The Aging Subcommittee of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services met on February 12 for its third meeting since being established. As with the previous two meeting, the Subcommittee continued to hear from representatives of aging organizations in the state and from state and local officials about programs available to assist older adults. The Subcommittee also reviewed and approved an interim report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, as called for by the

authorizing legislation, which contained one recommendation which was to recommend that Coauthors of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services allow the Subcommittee on Aging to continue its study of the State's delivery of services to older adults during the interim period following the 2018 Regular Session of the 2017 North Carolina General Assembly.

Coalition on Aging members presenting at the Subcommittee meeting were, from right to left in the picture below, Tracy Colvard (Association for Home and Hospice Care of NC); Adam Sholar (NC Health Care Facilities Association); Jeff Horton (NC Senior Living Association); and Teresa Johnson and Mark Bumgarner along with Michael Boles (NC Adult Day Services Association). The Subcommittee also heard from Karen Harrington and Tami Hefner with the Catawba County Department of Social Services about adult protective services (a priority issue for the Coalition) and from Dawn Oakey Gartman with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services about Project C.A.R.E (Caregivers Alternative to Running on Empy). To see PowerPoint copies of the presentations at the meeting and a copy of the interim report, click [here](#). A report by Tommy Goldsmith with *NC Health News* about the meeting can be found [here](#).



Special Legislative Session Ends: The state General Assembly wrapped up its latest special legislative session last week after passing HB 90, and omnibus bill covering class size reductions, adjusting composition of the State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement, and the mitigation fund for counties impacted by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Legislators are expected back in Raleigh on May 16 for the traditional short legislative session barring any special sessions that pop up between now and then. Interim Committees will continue their work, including working on plans for judicial redistricting.

Upcoming Elections: It looks like district maps may finally be set for the election of members to the NC General Assembly. A U.S. Supreme Court decision on February 6 reset district lines for the state House and state Senate. Barring further changes, the order means districts drawn by an outside expert will be used in Cumberland, Guilford, Hoke, Bladen, Sampson and Wayne counties. A panel of federal judges hired a redistricting expert, called a "special master," to correct unconstitutional racial gerrymanders that the court said the legislature had failed to fix.

In Wake and Mecklenburg counties, the Supreme Court decision allows districts the legislature approved last year to be used for the first time in 2018 rather than districts the expert constructed. Following the Supreme Court decision, on February 7, the Southern Coalition for Social Justice submitted a request for relief asking the state court to block the use of five state House districts for Wake and Mecklenburg counties and order them to use districts drawn by the special master. The filing period for candidates seeking office opened on February 12 and continues through February 28.

Primary elections for statewide judicial races in North Carolina are canceled again after an appeals court granted a request on February 9 from Republican lawmakers to temporarily halt a federal judge's ruling. Barring any further action by the courts, candidates seeking judicial seats in 2018 will file for election from June 18 to June 29.

Bipartisan Federal Budget Deal Reached: On February 9, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. The new law lifts the budget caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 for FY 18 and FY 19. There is almost \$300 billion in new spending including \$63 billion for domestic or non-defense discretionary programs in FY 18 and another \$68 billion in FY 19. Even with this new funding, it fails to make up for cuts made the last 10 years. Now that the spending levels are set, Congress has until March 23 to craft an omnibus package to enact all 12 FY 18 appropriations bills. New investments that have already been prioritized include \$3 billion to combat the opioid crisis, \$1 billion for the National Institutes of Health, and “adequate” funding for the Social Security Administration to ensure constituents are served. National aging advocacy groups are continuing to work to make sure that the omnibus removes threats posed to some key aging service programs. The House had proposed eliminating the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), cutting \$100 million from the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), cutting \$3 million from Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME), and reducing the Elder Justice Initiative by \$2 million.

The Bipartisan Budget Act includes positive changes to Medicare in the areas of benefits outreach, therapy services, Medicare Part D donut hole, in-home care, special needs plans, and chronic illness. The Act does not extend the Medicaid Money Follows the Person program or the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification Act which would improve the Medicare Part B enrollment process. The Act includes cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund and increases the percentage that Medicare beneficiaries with incomes of at least \$500,000 (\$750,000 for couples) must pay in Medicare Part B and Part D premiums from 80% to 85% of costs. See a good summary, provided by the National Council on Aging, of what the Budget Act means for seniors, by clicking [here](#).

Trump Administration Releases FY 19 Budget Request: President Trump released his **2019 budget proposal** on February 12 which calls for increased spending on the military, border security and the opioid crisis. See this [article](#) from *The Hill* for more details on the budget proposal. Although Congress seems likely to reject the proposal, the budget includes many of the cuts it proposed in aging services for FY 18 including elimination of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). It also includes proposals to cut Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and likely falls prevention and chronic disease self-management

(CDSME) funding. No action will be taken on the FY 19 process until Congress finishes up FY 18 appropriations by March 23.

State Aging Agency Announces Award Recipients: The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services has announced the 2017 recipients of its annual awards. The Maddox Award recognizes an individual or organization that has excelled in creative programming for older adults. **The Center for Volunteer Caregiving** in Cary, NC is this year's recipient of the Award. The Center's goal is to provide volunteer services to help older adults live as independently as possible for as long as possible. The **Town of Mooresville – Mayor's Senior Roundtable** is the recipient of the Messer Award which recognizes a community that has excelled in addressing the needs of its older citizens. The Town has worked to bring experts, public decision makers, and older adults together to increase its "senior friendliness." The third award, the Busse Award, is presented to 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 **Macon County Community Paramedic Program** is the award recipient. The Program is focused on bringing healthcare to people in their homes. Paramedics now make weekly home visits to 60 county residents which has resulted in a reduction in hospital readmissions, a reduction in 911 response to high utilizers of the service, improved quality of life for participants, and reduced transport of participants for both medical and behavioral health related issues.

PACE Program: Questions still come up, sometimes even from those working in the field of aging in the state, about the PACE Program and what it is. Rose Hoban with *NC Health New* did an excellent [story](#) the end of January about PACE so for those who want to know more, here are some of the highlights from Rose's story.

PACE, the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, provides health care for seniors frail enough to qualify for nursing home care. Instead of going to a nursing home, people enrolled in PACE programs come to the program center several days per week where they get meals, have activities, and receive all their health care. Participants also get some help at home, perhaps meals or medical equipment to make staying in their own houses easier.

Most of the people in PACE programs are seniors who receive Medicare, the federally funded health care program for seniors and some people with severe disabilities. Some of the participants are also poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. PACE programs are required to act as the "sole source of services" for these recipients, providing everything from medications and transportation, to physician care and emergency services, to care for severe illnesses like cancer or even hospice care. In return, agencies that manage PACE programs receive a set amount each month for each person in the program.

Despite good reviews, for the past three years, lawmakers have put the brakes on PACE expansion. Existing programs have only been permitted to add three new participants per month and no new programs have been able to get started. Some lawmakers have noted that while PACE costs about the same as a nursing home, not every PACE participant would have ended up in a nursing home which means the state spent money that could have been saved. Other lawmakers, however, tout the benefits of the program to the participants and their families and

want to look at ways to support and expand it. In the 2017 state budget bill, legislators mandated a report to learn whether PACE has been valuable for participants, to assess the quality of care, and to see if it's time to allow PACE to expand in North Carolina. That report is due to the General Assembly by March 1.

Marketplace Enrollment: North Carolina experienced a 5.3% decline in enrollment on the 2017 federal health insurance exchange, according to a report released on February 7. There were 519,803 enrollees for 2017, down from 549,158 in 2016, according to The National Academy for State Health Policy. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of N.C. covered 502,000 marketplace participants in 2017. It was the only provider in 95 of the state's 100 counties for 2018. The national enrollment was 11.8 million, down 3.7% from 2017. Even with the decline, North Carolina again had the fourth highest overall enrollment, as well as third highest among the 34 states on the federal-based marketplace. Read more on this [here](#).

Veterans Programs: The N.C. Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (DMVA) says that the state needs a comprehensive and strategic plan to address challenges facing veterans and their families. Larry Hall, secretary of the DMVA, presented the agency's findings to lawmakers on February 6 during a joint oversight committee meeting. The department's findings were part of a study required by SB 62, which was signed into law last year. The study covered potential methods of documenting, collecting and analyzing the outcome of various programs in the state on individual military veterans and their families. According to the recommendations, the plan should include a monitoring and evaluation component for each program or service, and a comprehensive inventory of all programs, services and other benefits available. Hall also laid out three additional recommendations that would need legislative action, including appropriating resources so the DMVA can develop a comprehensive strategic plan for veterans and their dependents. The other recommendations included creating a comprehensive and current inventory of veterans' program in the state and establishing an interim legislative committee or directing one to study solutions for increasing access to the programs. (The Insider, 2/7/18)

Behavioral Health Plan: The NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has submitted a strategic plan to the General Assembly for improving behavioral health services with a focus on resolving the opioid epidemic. The 90-page plan is the culmination of the Cooper administration's year-long initiative that featured six listening sessions statewide. More than 314,000 North Carolinians received behavioral health care last year, including more than 207,000 adults for substance abuse. Dr. Mandy Cohen, the Secretary of the Department, said the plan recommends investing in building local community service capacity; accelerating the integration of behavioral and physical health care; increasing and better utilizing behavioral health services and the sector's workforce, and expanding the use of telemedicine. The integration initiative would include routine screening and fostering better communication between behavioral and physical health providers. That component is a primary goal of the state's Medicaid waiver request, submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by the McCrory administration in 2016 and amended by the Cooper administration in November. Health officials urge legislators to respond to "the greater need of closing the current health insurance coverage gap" through expanding Medicaid to an additional 500,000 individuals, potentially through a controversially proposed work requirement for certain recipients. DHHS said 144,000 of those potential Medicaid expansion beneficiaries have a mental health or substance abuse disorder.

Other News and Updates

The state Department of Administration has announced that on February 8 it mailed letters and an enclosed check of almost \$10,500 to people who were sterilized under North Carolina's eugenics program. This is the third and final **compensation payment to sterilization victims**.

State Treasurer Dale Folwell has called for a \$1 billion performance bond as a condition of allowing **a proposed joint operating agreement between UNC and Atrium Health, formerly Carolinas HealthCare**, to go through. Folwell said the bond would act as a guarantee that the merger wouldn't raise costs for North Carolina taxpayers or the state's employee health plan, which he oversees. State Attorney General Josh Stein is also asking for more details on the proposed operating agreement, saying it's impossible for his office to review the deal based on the little information he's been given. [Read](#) more on this.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, passed in late December, allows states to form economic areas, known as **opportunity zones, in rural and low-income communities**. Low-income census tracts are areas where the poverty rate is 20 percent or greater, and/or family income is less than 80 percent of the area's median income. Those zones are eligible to offer tax incentives for qualified investors "to reinvest unrealized capital gains." States are authorized to designate up to 25% of their total low-income census tracts as qualified opportunity zones. The N.C. Commerce Department reports that the state has just more than 1,000 qualifying low-income census tracts, and it can designate up to 251 census tracts as opportunity zones.

State Treasurer Dale Folwell announced on February 6 that the **state pension plan reported gains** of 13.5% for the calendar year 2017, outperforming its benchmark of 12.8%. Pension fund assets were valued at \$98.3 billion, up from \$89.1 billion at the end of 2016. The pension plan, known as the North Carolina Retirement Systems, is managed by the N.C. Department of State Treasurer. Treasurer Folwell has also announced that because the new **federal tax plan lowers the amount of federal taxes on benefit payments to North Carolina retirees**, the average state retiree will save about \$18 a month, which could amount to about \$220 a year. There are approximately 312,000 people getting retirement benefits from the state.

State health officials announced last Thursday that the **state death toll** at that time **for the 2017-18 flu season is 165**, including 132 deaths in the last five weeks. The death toll surpasses every winter flu season since 2003 when the government changed the way it measures flu.

There are a number of **changes coming at the state legislative buildings**. The Legislative Services offices of the General Assembly has announced that "tabling" where visitors and groups often congregate in the indoor courtyards of the Legislative Building for legislative advocacy days and information sharing events will no longer be allowed. Instead, such activities are now being directed to the legislative dining room. The Legislative Building and the Legislative Office Building will also be getting metal detectors, but it's unclear when visitors and lawmakers will see them. The Coalition is currently re-evaluating plans for our spring Legislative Advocacy Day in light of the ban on "tabling."

On February 22, the NC Institute of Medicine hosted the first of three sessions of a new **Legislative Health Policy Fellows Programs**. Through the Program, twenty-two members of the NC General Assembly will learn about health issues facing North Carolina, structure and financing of the state's health care system, priorities for healthcare delivery and opportunities for improving health. Sessions will provide information on public and private health care financing, the role of Health and Human Services agencies, and resources for health policy data and research. The additional sessions are scheduled later in February and March. Read more [here](#).

The Joint Legislative Research Commission Committee on Access to Healthcare in Rural North Carolina met for its second meeting on February 15. Click [here](#) to get copies of materials from the meeting which included presentations on the telemedicine study and recommendations, the state of dental care in rural North Carolina, the state of pharmacy access in rural North Carolina, training and retaining North Carolina physicians, loan repayment programs available to medical providers practicing in rural North Carolina, financial incentives for physicians in rural areas, and how advanced practice RN's can help mitigate the rural health care crisis.

The **U.S. Commission on Civil Rights** was in Raleigh on February 2 to look at access to voting for minorities. According to the Commission, North Carolina could provide a lens through which to examine voting rights nationwide. In recent years, courts have struck down North Carolina laws requiring photo identification to vote and limiting early voting and ruled against redrawn congressional and legislative voting districts, usually because of the adverse impact the changes would have on minority voters.

A study out of East Carolina University has found that **the mortality rate for white people ages 45-54** from 2000 to 2013 increased by 5.9%. "A large portion of the increase in mortality is attributed to 'deaths of despair' -- suicide, liver disease, drug overdose and behaviors that lead to these deaths," ECU professor emeritus Dr. Chris Mansfield told university news services. Increases in obesity and lack of health insurance were other risk factors identified. The most dramatic increases in the mortality rate for midlife whites were found in North Carolina's poorest counties.

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) invites the public to **comment on proposed changes to the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS)**. There are new measures, changes to existing measures and guidelines and strategies for addressing issues that apply across various HEDIS measures. This is an opportunity for health plans, purchasers, consumers and other stakeholders to weigh in on the relevance, scientific soundness and feasibility of new and revised measures. Public comment is accepted from February 13 to March 13. [Submit Comments](#)

The Trump administration has reportedly rejected a proposal to alter **questions on the 2020 Census about race** that would have provided greater clarity on the Latino population and people with roots in the Middle East or North Africa. The Census Bureau had previously concluded that the proposed questions could improve accuracy, specifically in diversity, and improve how

people understand race and ethnicity. The questionnaire for the 2020 Census will retain the same questions on ethnicity as the previous two decennial surveys.

NC Child, a state child advocacy group, has added its voice to those **urging the Republican-controlled legislature to expand Medicaid** to more than 500,000 North Carolinians. NC Child notes that states that have expanded Medicaid have a lower infant mortality rate than those who haven't. The group supports HB 662, titled "Carolina Cares," that represents a bipartisan effort to expand Medicaid. The bill has not advanced out of committee in the General Assembly.

A recently released **High Point University Poll** finds that North Carolinians give President Donald Trump a job approval rating of 38% and Gov. Roy Cooper an approval rating of 46%. A majority, 57%, say the country is headed in the wrong direction. In other findings from the poll, 15% of North Carolinians approve of how Congress is doing its job, and the N.C. General Assembly had a job approval rating of 31%. **Another poll taken by Meredith College** on January 21 and 25 found that there appears to be no difference in enthusiasm among Democratic, Republican and unaffiliated voters in North Carolina. The poll found not only that preferences for congressional and legislative candidates appear to be relatively equal, but that voters expressed a slight preference for Republican candidates. Asked about congressional races, respondents favored Republicans over Democrats 45.2% to 43.5%. The gap existed for legislative races too but was smaller, as respondents favored Republicans 43.3 percent to 42.5 percent for Democrats.

In 2016, more than 675 million **opioid pain-killers** were dispensed to North Carolina residents, a 52% increase over a five-year period. That breaks down to more than 65 pills for every man, woman and child in the state. In a third of North Carolina's 100 counties, there were more opioid prescriptions than people. Between 1999 and 2016, N.C. deaths tied to opioids grew by more than 900%.

NC Senior Games has announced its schedule for local and state games for 2018. Local Games will be held February 1 – June 15. The schedule for State Finals events is:

- Raleigh/Cary/Durham Events – September 17-24
- Bocce and Cornhole Tournaments – October 2-3
- Softball Tournament – October 5-8
- Pickleball Tournament – October 16-18
- Golf Tournament – October 16-17
- Basketball Tournament – To Be Determined

To find out more details go to www.ncseniorgames.org.

United Way of North Carolina has announced that Emily Duberman has joined the **NC 2-1-1** team to serve in the role of **Dedicated Long-Term Care Services and Support (LTSS) Call Specialist**. As part of the No Wrong Door contract with DHHS, NC 2-1-1 serves as the portal for individuals and families seeking information and referral to long term services and supports for older adults and persons with disabilities. In her role as the Dedicated LTSS Call Specialist, Emily will help to assess and triage 2-1-1 callers who present complex needs related to LTSS and will work with those individuals and families to provide a more comprehensive approach to

identifying the resources needed to meet their needs. Prior to coming to 2-1-1, she worked as a Case Manager and Care Coordinator for several organizations.

The National Council on Aging announced this month that it has added 20 new Benefits Enrollment Centers (BECs) to its network of BECs across the country which help low-income Medicare beneficiaries in 69 communities across 36 states to get personalized assistance enrolling in programs that pay for health care, prescriptions, food, utilities, and other needs. The **Council on Aging in Buncombe County is one of the new BECs** which are funded through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA), administered at the federal level by the U.S. Administration for Community Living.

Governor Cooper has launched a new **initiative to called Hometown Strong** that will help rural counties track down funding from state, federal and nonprofit sources. The Governor noted that not enough is being done to help rural N.C. counties build roads, expand high-speed internet, train people in job skills and find other ways to improve the economy so he has launched this initiative to make that happen much faster. Eighty of North Carolina's 100 counties are designated as rural.

President Donald Trump's recently released budget plan contains a **proposal to send food stamp recipients boxes of food** in place of half of the money they receive each month to shop on their own. About 1.4 million people in North Carolina use food stamps.

Coalition on Aging member, the Center for Responsible Lending, warns **that H.R. 3299, the Protecting Consumers' Access to Credit Act of 2017**, which passed the U.S. House last Wednesday, will upend North Carolina's ban on payday lending and will open the door to "rent-a-bank" schemes, in which short-term lenders use a national bank's charter to circumvent state law. The Center notes that similar methods are now used to get around state usury laws. Rep. Patrick McHenry, a Republican member of U.S. House leadership from our state, says the bill is not what its critics contend and is designed to help Americans with poor credit.

The **NC Department of Transportation has launched its third annual customer survey**. The department will be mailing thousands of printed surveys to residents chosen at random in every county. The survey, which takes about 15 minutes to complete, can also be completed on-line at www.ncdot.gov/newsroom by anyone who wants to participate. The survey covers everything from the price of airport food to the punctuality of ferry service. The N.C. General Assembly has required the annual survey since 2016 and uses its results to help measure NC DOT's success at meeting customer expectations across the full range of its responsibilities. Survey responses must be received by March 31. The results will be made public at www.ncdot.gov this summer.

According to a **federal audit, Charlotte-based Carolinas HealthCare System** overbilled the federal Medicare program an estimated \$1.7 million for patients treated at two hospitals near uptown. The findings on Carolinas Medical Center and CMC-Mercy are part of a report in January from the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Inspector General, which routinely conducts similar reviews of U.S. hospitals. Carolinas HealthCare says it plans to appeal the findings. To read more on this, click [here](#).

The Insider turned 25 years old on January 27 2018. To commemorate its anniversary, it republished its first edition which was on January 26, 1993. To see what was going on in state government and on the political front 25 years ago, click [here](#).

According to data released in January by The Pew Charitable Trusts, **North Carolina's "rainy day"** fund ranks 14th in the country for the number of days it could sustain state government operations. Republican legislators have beefed up the fund in recent budget cycles despite some objections from Democrats who say the money could be better used for other needs. According to Pew, the current reserve fund balance is \$1.8 billion, or 8.3 percent of annual spending. That means state government could operate for 30.4 days using only the rainy day fund before it would run out of money.

NC Spin, the longest locally produced public affairs show in the southeast, moved from WRAL-TV to its new television home at UNC-TV on January 19. The show will be broadcast on UNC-TV on Friday nights at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 12:30 p.m. It will also be on the North Carolina Channel on Fridays at 10:00 p.m., Saturdays at 4:30 p.m., and Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Starting this month, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) is launching an **accreditation program for emergency rooms, certifying at least a minimal level of geriatric competence** - another effort to improve care and outcomes for older adults. Three levels of accreditation - basic, intermediate and advanced - will be offered. For each of these levels, emergency rooms will be required to provide walkers, canes, food and drink, and reading glasses to older patients. For intermediate and advanced accreditation, physicians will have to oversee improvement initiatives, such as limiting the use of urinary catheters in older patients. Also, changes to the ER environment such as nonslip floors and enhanced lighting will be required, along with amenities such as hearing devices, thicker mattresses and warm blankets. Read [more](#) on ER visits and older adults.

The NC Department of Motor Vehicles can issue a “**VETERAN**” **designation on driver licenses and identification cards** to help veterans get military discounts without having to show paperwork or other identification. Veterans who were honorably discharged can bring their DD-214 discharge forms to apply at any drivers’ license office in the state.

AARP North Carolina has been raising concerns at N.C. Utility Commission hearings about **Duke Energy’s proposal to hike utility rates**. The organization says it is hearing from older adults, particularly those on fixed incomes, across the state who are deeply concerned about the impact of a large rate hike.

Reports surfacing on President Trump’s proposed budget note that some Medicare beneficiaries would face higher **prescription drug costs** under the budget even as the sickest patients save thousands of dollars, a complex trade-off that may make it harder to sell Congress on the plan in an election year. The administration says its proposals strike a balance between improving the popular "Part D" prescription benefit for the 42 million seniors enrolled, while correcting design flaws that increase program costs for taxpayers. Read more on this [here](#).

By 2030, Medicare beneficiaries will be spending half of their Social Security benefit **on out-of-pocket Medicare expenses**, according to a new report from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The findings highlight the particular challenge of rising medical costs for low-income older adults.

[Read the report.](#)

On January 24, Anna Maria Chávez, Chief Strategy Officer and Senior Vice President for External Affairs for NCOA, appeared before the **U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging**. She highlighted the challenging decisions facing Americans turning 65, and spoke at length about the need for more resources to help them make the best decisions for their circumstances and goals. [Read her testimony](#) or [Watch the recording](#) of her remarks.

Stacy Canan who leads the Office for Older Americans at the **federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)** reports that her name is being used in an elaborate **imposter scam**. If someone calls and claims to be a CFPB official confirming a sweepstakes prize for you, this is a scam. CFPB staff do not collect information about lottery or sweepstakes winnings, nor do they call people to confirm winnings. This [latest blog](#) from CFPB provided helpful information about how to prevent this scam and others like it.

While the **rate of hospitalizations** (excluding pregnancies and newborns) declined for all age groups from 2000 to 2015, the biggest drop -- 25 percent -- occurred among patients 65 and older. (Source: AHRQ, Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project Statistical Brief #235: [*Trends in Hospital Inpatient Stays by Age and Payer, 2000-2015*](#))

The independent CMS Office of the Actuary has released the **projected national health expenditures for 2017-2026**. This office annually produces projections of health care spending for categories within the National Health Expenditure Accounts, which track health spending by source of funds (for example, private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid), by type of service (hospital, physician, prescription drugs, etc.), and by sponsor (businesses, households, governments). The latest projections begin after the latest historical year (2016) and go through 2026. [Click here](#) for more information.

Medicaid Assisted Living Services: Improved Federal Oversight of Beneficiary Health and Welfare Is Needed – This report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examines state and federal oversight of assisted living services in Medicaid. Individuals receiving long-term care services from Medicaid in community residential settings is expected to grow. Assisted living facilities allow individuals, who might otherwise require nursing home care, to remain in the community. This report describes state spending on and coverage of these services; describes how state Medicaid agencies oversee the health and welfare of beneficiaries in these settings; and examines the extent that CMS oversees state Medicaid agency monitoring of assisted living services. [Click here](#) to read the report.

The **new poverty guidelines have been released** for **2018**. These guidelines account for the 2.1 percent increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index between calendar years 2016 and 2017. The poverty guidelines are derived from the Census Bureau's current official poverty thresholds; they are not derived from the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). [Click here](#) for more information.

People in the News

Since candidate filing season has opened, several long serving members of the NC General Assembly have announced that they will not seek re-election. The longest serving member of the General Assembly, **Rep. H.M. "Mickey" Michaux, D- Durham**, who has won 22 elections, has announced that he will retire from elected office after 43 years in politics. **Rep. Beverly Earle, D-Mecklenburg**, a 12 term House members who serves on the Aging Subcommittee of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee of Health and Human Services, and **Rep. Jeff Collins, R- Nash**, who has served since 2011, have also announced their retirements. On the Senate side, **Sen. Angela Bryant**, D-Nash, who has served 12 years in the state legislature (three terms in the House and three in the Senate) has also announced she will not seek a fourth term in the Senate. She said it would be difficult for her to win in a redrawn district.

Nelson Freeman who served as House Speaker Tim Moore's top advisor on tax policy, information technology policy, Alcohol Beverage Control and economic development will join the Government Relations Team for the Raleigh office of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton as a government relations advisor on March 1. Prior to joining Speaker Moore's office, Freeman served as the N.C. Department of Revenue's legislative liaison.

Lee Lilley has joined the staff of Governor Roy Cooper as Director of Legislative Affairs. He formerly worked for McGuireWoods Consulting in Washington, D.C which including working as an energy lobbyist, and served previously on staff for Congressman J.K. Butterfield. Lilley's relationship with the state legislature got off to a "interesting" start. He was five days on the new job when he appeared before a legislative committee and was grilled at length about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline fund.

Suzanne Merrill has announced that she will retire as the Director of the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services effective April 1. Her last work day is March 2. We wish her all the best in her retirement and as she continues to recuperate from surgery held the end of 2017.

Matt Gross joined the NC Department of Health and Human Services Office of Government Affairs as Director and Assistant Secretary for Legislation in January. He previously worked for NC Child and the NC Partnership for Children.

Jesse Goodman retired from the NC Division of Health Service Regulation the end of January. He was **Section Chief of the Health Care Personnel Education and Credentialing Section**.

Bill Lamb, Executive Director for Coalition member Friends of Residents in Long Term Care, has been selected by the [National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care](#) to serve on their Leadership Council. The Leadership Council is the body of the organization charged with development of the public policy and programmatic agenda, conducting stakeholder outreach and connecting the Consumer Voice to other interest groups and coalitions. The Consumer Voice is the leading national organization representing consumers in issues related to long-term care.

Kenneth Foster from Wilkesboro has been named by Governor Roy Cooper to serve as an at-large member to the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.

Tommy Goldsmith who worked for many years with the *News and Observer* has rejoined *NC Health News* as a reporter. One of his areas of reporting will be aging issues.

Sally Cameron, Executive Director of the NC Psychological Association, has announced her retirement at the end of 2018. She joined the Association in 1981.

Lt. Governor Dan Forest will serve as chairman of the Republican Lieutenant Governor's Association for 2018. There are 31 Republican Lieutenant Governors.

Rep. Justin Burr, R-Stanly, is engaged to **Blair Borsuk**, a House staff member. The couple plans to wed in April. Borsuk has worked as a research assistant in Burr's office and as an intern in the House speaker's office.

It is rumored that **U.S. Rep. Mark Meadows'** name is on several short lists of possible replacements for White House Chief of Staff John Kelly should Kelly leave this position.

Upcoming Meetings/Events

February 20, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.; On-line meeting – Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group established by General Assembly ([Link to Workgroup Meetings and Materials](#))

February 21, 2018 - Modern Times, More Modern Crimes: 2018 – “In the Eye of the Storm:” How Elder Abuse, Fraud and Exploitation are Fueled by the Opioid Epidemic - from 8:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. at Surf City Welcome and Visitor Center (102 N. Shore Drive) in Surf City

February 21, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. - **Webinar on Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Quality Measurement Tools**. This is the fourth event in ACL's HCBS quality informational webinar series. Learn from Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) experts about HCBS quality measurement tools. [Please click here to register for the webinar.](#)

February 26, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 544 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh - **Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee**

February 27, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 544 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh - **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and NC Health Choice, Joint Behavioral Health Subcommittee**

February 27, 2018 - Friends of Residents in Long Term Care Conversation with Friends - at New Hanover County Senior Center from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Wilmington, NC

February 28, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh - **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services**

February 28, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh - **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and NC Health Choice**

March is March for Meals (on Wheels) Month and Community Champions (for Meals) Week is March 19-23. For information go to www.marchformeals.com

March 1, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh – **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, Joint Subcommittee on Medical Education and Medical Residency Programs**

March 1-4, 2018 - Association for Gerontology in Higher Education Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.

March 8, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh - **Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee**

March 13-14, 2018 - Senior Tar Heel Legislature Meeting at Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel, Chapel Hill, NC

March 14-15, 2018 - NC Association on Aging State Aging Conference at Great Wolf Lodge in Concord, NC

March 15, 2018 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. – Webinar that looks at NCOA survey on pet policies in senior centers that was completed in 2017 in partnership with the Human Animal Bond Research Institute. Ways to include pets and pet therapy programs at centers will be highlighted. Click [here](#) to calendar.

March 26-29, 2018 - American Society on Aging's '[Aging in America Conference](#)' in San Francisco, CA.

March 29, 2018 - Mental Illness in Older Adults: [Psychosocial Impacts on Patients and Caregivers](#) at The Education Center at Eastern AHEC, Greenville, NC.

April 10-14, 2018 - Southern Gerontological Society Meeting at Lake Lanier in Buford, Georgia

April 12-13, 2018 - NC PACE Association 5th Annual Conference - Setting the PACE 2018: A Decade of Progress, A Future of Promise - at Sheraton Imperial in Durham. For more information go to www.ncpace.org.

April 28, 2018 -NC Baptist Aging Ministry (NC BAM) Rampin' Up 2018 - (building wheel chair ramps across state)

May 3, 2018 – A Newer Problem in Older Age: Substance Use Disorders in Older Adults at William F. Andrews Center/Wake AHEC from 9:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

May 5, 2018 -NC Baptist Aging Ministry (NC BAM) Rampin' Up 2018 - (building wheel chair ramps across state)

May 16 at 12:00 noon – NC House of Representatives and NC Senate Convene for Short Legislative Session

May 16, 2018 -NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse Annual Conference - at Wake Tech Community College, Raleigh, NC

May 17, 2018 -Senior Consumer Fraud Task Force Meeting - from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at AARP NC (5511 Capital Center Blvd., Suite 400) in Raleigh

May 22-24, 2018 – [NCOA Center for Healthy Aging Annual Meeting](#) in Arlington, Virginia.

June 3-6, 2018 - 2018 Annual Information and Referral Training and Education Conference - in Dallas, Texas

June 14, 2018 - Caregiver Summit - at The Sheraton Imperial (4700 Emperor Blvd.) in Durham from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm - Info. & Registration [Click Here](#).

June 23, 2018 - Triangle EXPO for LGBTQ Aging Adults - at Five Points Center for Active Adults, Raleigh, NC

July 16-17, 2018 - Healthy Aging Summit - at Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

August 7, 2018 - Caregiver Summit - at The William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education (100 Friday Center Dr.) in Chapel Hill from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm - Info. & Registration [Click Here](#).

August 27-30, 2018 - National Home and Community Based Services Conference - at Baltimore Marriott Waterfront, Baltimore, Maryland

September 10-12, 2018 - The Carolinas Center 42nd Annual Hospice and Palliative Care Conference "How We Strengthen the Tools in Our Toolbox" - at Hilton Charlotte University Place in Charlotte

October 2, 2018 - Caregiver Summit - at Campbell University, Leon Levine Hall of Medical Sciences (4350 U.S. 421 S) in Lillington from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm - Info. & Registration [Click Here](#).

October 22-24, 2018 - 2018 Consumer Voice Conference - at Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia

October 30, 2018 - Caregiver Summit -2018 at McKimmon Conference Center (1101 Gorman St.) in Raleigh from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm - Info. & Registration [Click Here](#).

November 14-18, 2018 - Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts

Articles/News Stories/Resources

[**Alex Azar confirmed by Senate as new head of Health and Human Services**](#)

[**The Health 202: Alex Azar's first big test: Will he enforce Obamacare?**](#)

[**Editorial: Americans deserve to have access to potentially life-saving drugs**](#)

[**Trump wants to overhaul America's safety net with giant cuts to housing, food stamps and health care**](#)

[**ACA's state-run insurance exchanges fare better than the law's federal marketplace**](#)

[**After approving Medicaid work requirements, Trump's HHS aims for lifetime coverage limits**](#)

[**Making Medicaid a pathway out of poverty**](#) (Op-ed by Seema Verma, CMS)

[**New report details misuse of antipsychotics in nursing homes**](#)

[**The Health 202: Health care is still a top issue for voters in 2018. But Republicans lack a script.**](#)

[**Trump signs RAISE Family Caregivers Act**](#)

[**The Health 202: Trump officials want to excuse more Americans from getting Obamacare**](#)

[**Trump's move may nudge holdout GOP states to expand Medicaid**](#)

[**The Health 202: President Trump may have inadvertently boosted Obamacare enrollment**](#)

[**Adult smoking rate rises slightly in 2016 to 15.5 percent**](#)

[**Government shutdown ends after 3 days of recriminations**](#)

[**Short-term spending agreement provides longer-term relief for CHIP**](#)

[**Kentucky's new idea of Medicaid access: Pass health literacy course**](#)

[Drop in life expectancy in U.S. tied to drugs, alcohol, suicide](#)

[The Health 202: Here's the one real change to drug pricing being ignored by Congress](#)

[CDC director resigns over financial conflicts of interest](#)

[Medicaid Transportation At Risk In Some States](#)

[America at Home: Grandparents in the Attic, Children in the Basement](#)

[Come for the Herring, Stay for the Chitchat: An Unlikely Haven for the Aged](#)

[A Perfect Storm for Broken Bones](#)

['Aging Pride' Challenges the Cult of Youth](#)

[If Immigrants Are Pushed Out, Who Will Care for the Elderly?](#)

[Grandude: G-dawg? Nonney? Boomers Name Themselves](#)

[Trump Passed a Cognitive Exam. What Does That Really Mean?](#)

[Guide to Keeping Your Home Through Debilitating Disease](#)

[What Are Reverse Mortgages, and How Do They Work?](#)

[How to Incorporate Family Caregivers in Chronic Care Management](#)

North Carolina Related:

NC Health News Stories:

- [NC's Older Population Burgeons, While Services Lag, Legislators Hear at Panel](#)
- ['Safety Net' Hospitals Face Federal Budget Cuts](#)
- [Transport for Older People Tied to Health](#)
- [Oral Health Initiative Seeks to Reduce Disease Among Seniors](#)
- [Telemedicine Holds Promise for Expanding Rural Access](#)
- [Advocates Look to Pick Up the PACE of Seniors Using Comprehensive Program](#)
- [Association health plans draw interest, scrutiny](#)

- [N.C. Rural Health by the Numbers](#)
- [Lack of Rural Specialists Means Hours in the Car for One Family](#)
- [Is That Rural Hospital Really Necessary?](#)

[DHHS launches campaign to boost employment among people with disabilities](#)

[State program to get disabled jobs touted as “win-win”](#)

[Medicaid reform is coming](#)

[Like Blue Apron, but with canned meat. Trump’s food box plan raises a lot of questions](#)

[Rural parts of North Carolina need more doctors. He’s trying to change that](#)

[Aetna gives \\$1 million to fight opioid addiction in rural NC](#)

[NC housing award helps mountain seniors, veterans and disabled repair their homes](#)

[Curbing opioid prescriptions is hurting people in chronic pain, critics say. Is this true?](#)

[When it's time to move mom - lifting the veil on your options](#)

[Carolinas HealthCare System Changes Its Name To Atrium Health](#)

[Contracts for services to adult care home residents raise concerns](#)

[New senior living center pitched for Cary](#)

[CCNC maps out strategy to navigate tech, Medicaid changes](#)

[Why CCNC is building its executive ranks amid NC's Medicaid reform](#)

[Following the Adult Care Home Money in North Carolina](#)

[ECU study: Middle-aged whites in NC dying at faster rate](#)

[NC Community Health Centers in jeopardy ahead of possible government shutdown](#)

[Medicaid work requirement still may not be enough to spur expansion in N.C.](#)

[Wake Forest Baptist, Hugh Chatham join to run Alleghany hospital](#)

[National Wear Red Day is all about heart health](#)

[Let's put politics aside and expand Medicaid now](#) (Opinion, Rep. MaryAnn Black)

[Gallery: Inside look at the new Broughton Hospital](#)

[N.C., along with other states, faces nursing shortage in schools](#)

[Health, DSS consolidation moves forward in Jackson](#)

[Building in Onslow Co. to consolidate health, economic services](#)

[North Carolina needs Carolina Cares](#) (Letter to Editor, *News and Observer*)

[American Lung Association gives NC failing grades in tobacco use prevention \(Dr. Tilson interviewed\)](#)

[North Carolina ranked near the bottom for tobacco use prevention](#)

[Judge: Hope to decide on Cedarbrook admissions by mid-February](#)

[BCBSNC opposes UNC Health Care, Carolinas Health Care partnership](#)

[North Carolina let 5% of nursing home deficiencies go unchecked](#)

[UNC announces new \\$1.6M partnership aimed at diversifying health informatics field](#)

[Weaverville woman charged with abuse after neglecting care of disabled person](#)

[WNC medical providers say IV bag supply down to trickle because of national shortage](#)

[The integrated approach to health that could save our system millions](#)

[Urge Congress to #protectSNAP and help vulnerable North Carolinians](#) (Opinion)

[North Carolina food stamp numbers are too good to be true](#)

[Charlotte Talks: North Carolina's Rural Health Crisis](#)

[Thousands with disabilities in North Carolina wait years for services](#)

[The High Cost of Care in North Carolina](#) (January/February 2018 NC Medical Journal)

(Sen.) [Ballard Visits Harrill Senior Center](#) (in Boone)

[America is Facing a Shortage of Caregivers](#) (Commentary)

NPR Aging Series:

- Scientists Explore Ties Between Alzheimer's And Brain's Ancient Immune System
- Young Kids Are Getting The Best Protection From Current Flu Vaccine
- Study Finds 179,000 Nursing Home Residents Needlessly Being Given Antipsychotic Drugs
- Risky Antipsychotic Drugs Still Overprescribed In Nursing Homes
- Eating Leafy Greens Each Day Tied to Sharper Memory, Slower Decline
- Mushrooms Are Good For You, But Are They Medicine?
- Indiana's Brand Of Medicaid Drops 25,000 People For Failure To Pay Premiums
- Got Your Flu Shot Yet? Consider This A Reminder
- Flu Virus Can Trigger A Heart Attack
- Reporter Shares Life Lessons From A Year With 'The Oldest Old'
- Tax Credit Aims To Boost Availability Of Paid Family Leave, But Will It Work?
- Nursing Home Recreates Communist East Germany For Dementia Patients

Dates for 2018 Coalition Meetings: Mark your calendar for all the Coalition's meetings for the rest of the year. The schedule is as follows:

2018 Meeting Dates

February 23 (at NC Division on Aging and Adult Services' conference room)

March 23

April 20

May 18

June 22

August 24

September 28 (annual meeting at NC State University Club)

October 26

December 7

Meetings are held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in room 104 of the Brown Building on the Dix Campus (801 Biggs Drive) unless notified otherwise. For those who can not attend in person but can call in, the call in number is [1-866-215-3402](tel:1-866-215-3402) and the passcode is 5080266#.

Membership Renewal: We are well into 2018 and it is time for those who have not done so yet to renew their membership in the Coalition for the next year. It is also a good time for those who are not Coalition members to consider joining. We have worked hard to make the Coalition a visible and effective advocate for older North Carolina which gives voice to issues that are important to seniors and their family caregivers as well as to those who work in the field of aging in the state. Our legislative, public policy, education and outreach efforts do make a difference.

Membership registration/renewal can be done in one of two ways. You can complete and return the form attached to this *Update* along with dues payment (payable to the NC Coalition on Aging) to the address noted on the form. A second option is to go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx> and complete the registration and payment process (PayPal) on-line. Contributions in addition to dues can also be paid in this way. The Coalition has a hardship provision for those who wish to join the Coalition but are unable to pay the full dues amount. To apply for this hardship provision, please contact Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com.



Mary Bethel, Coalition President, is pictured with Tom Akins, President and CEO of LeadingAge NC, which recently renewed its membership in the Coalition on Aging and made an additional contribution to support the work of the Coalition. Special thanks is extended to LeadingAge and the other agency/organization members and individual supporters who have made donations above and beyond their membership dues to help with our efforts.

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/>.