



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging January Update – January 10, 2017

Old Year Goes Out with a Bang and New Year Brings “Icy” Conditions – By this time you have been bombarded with innumerable news accounts of all the political developments taking place in our state since the November elections. When all is said and done, we have a new Governor who is a Democrat, a Republican controlled legislature with a super majority in both chambers, and legal battles on many fronts. What this means for moving forward and whether groups such as the Coalition on Aging are able to have their legislative agendas addressed remains to be seen. Although the political climate presents challenges, we can hope that our state’s leaders can come together and find common ground to take up issues that are important to our citizens including the five priorities identified by the Coalition. Our job is to continue to make the case for why things like increasing funding for the Home and Community Care Block Grant, strengthening support for adult protective services and guardianship, raising reimbursement rates for Medicaid Personal Care Services and the Community Alternatives Programs for Disabled Adults so workers can make a living wage, supporting family caregivers to help keep them in the workforce, and establishing a legislative committee to examine the needs of our state’s older citizens makes sense for our state as our older population continues to grow.

Growth in Senior Population – And speaking of the state’s older population continuing to grow, special thanks to Rose Hoban with *NC Health News* for the [article](#) on January 9 about the growth in our senior population. As pointed out in the article, by 2018, there will be more people in the state over the age of 60 than there will be under 17. The state’s 65+ population grew by 38.1% from 2003 to 2013 while the national average was 27.7%. By 2030, about one in four North Carolinians will be over 60, and people over 85 will be the fastest growing population group. In 2013, about 14% of all residents were over 65. According to the UNC Population Center, the state’s older adult population will grow steadily in coming decades with North Carolina projected to have 2.5 million residents age 65 and older in 2035. Data cited in the article came from the US Census Bureau, the US Department of Health and Human Services, and the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics.

Legislature Returns Briefly – Legislators will return to Raleigh on January 11 for a ceremonial first day of session where they will be sworn in and take care of other formalities. They will then return home for two weeks before returning on January 25 to officially start work.

New Legislators Profiled – Over the course of the next several weeks, NC Policy Watch is chatting with some of the new members of the NC General Assembly to gain more insight on who they are and what their legislative priorities are. We will share information from Policy Watch on new members as we become aware of it. See the profile of Rep. Philip Lehman, D-Durham by clicking [here](#).

NC General Assembly E-Mail Subscription Lists Purged – The General Assembly is starting fresh with its e-mail subscription lists in the 2017 session. In order to continue receiving e-mail notifications, you must re-subscribe to the lists. To get the specific notifications listed below, click on the link and follow the directions.

To continue receiving the daily calendars via this subscription list for the 2017-2018 session, visit <http://www.ncleg.net/Calendars/PastCalendars/Calendars%20By%20Email.html>.

To continue receiving the Ratification, Bill Presentment, and Chaptered Bill Sheets via this subscription list for the 2017-2018 session, visit <http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/Ratified%20Bill%20Info/Email%20Notification.html>.

To continue receiving notices for every Senate Committee via this subscription list for the 2017-2018 session, visit <http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Committees/Committees.asp?sAction=ViewDLForm&sActionDetails=Senate%20Standing>.

To continue receiving notices for every House Committee via this subscription list for the 2017-2018 session, visit <http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Committees/Committees.asp?sAction=ViewDLForm&sActionDetails=House%20Standing>.

House Democrats Select Leaders – Rep. Darren Jackson from Wake County has been selected as the House minority leader. He replaces Rep. Larry Hall from Durham who had been the House Democratic leader since 2013. He decided not to seek another term. Rep. Jackson is an attorney and has served District 39 since January of 2009. He has been a major opponent of HB 2. The House Democratic Caucus also elected three whips: Rep. Bobbie Richardson from Franklin County, Rep. Garland Pierce from Scotland County, and Rep. Verla Insko from Orange County.

Governor Cooper Seeks Medicaid Expansion – In his first week in office, Governor Cooper [announced](#) that he would seek to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, which Republicans in Congress want to repeal. On Friday, January 6, his office sent a [letter/plan](#) to federal regulators alerting them to his intentions to seek changes that could provide healthcare to

more than 500,000 people starting in January 2018. According to the letter, there is a 10 day posting period in accordance with N.C.G.S. 108-54-1A(d) in which public comment is accepted. The plan amends the Medicaid reform waiver request submitted June 1 by former Governor McCrory's administration. Leaders in the Republican controlled state legislature have opposed expansion and on January 5 asked the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to reject the request. On January 9, the Obama administration pledged to act quickly on the Governor's expansion request. Also on January 9, two Republicans in the US House of Representatives from North Carolina, Reps. Robert Pittenger and Richard Hudson, sent a letter to CMS's acting administrator urging him to reject the expansion plan. The letter was co-signed by additional state US Representatives Budd, Foxx, Holding, McHenry, Meadows, Rouzer, and Walker.

Update on the Ever Evolving Issue of Legislative Districts – On January 4, three federal judges denied a request by state legislators to postpone their earlier order requiring state House and Senate districts be drawn and elections held this year. Last August, the judges ruled that legislators had relied too heavily on race when they drew 28 legislative districts in 2011. They agreed that there was not enough time to fix the situation before the November election so they ordered districts to be redrawn by March 15 with primaries held in the summer and a special general election in the fall. Lawmakers appealed the ruling to the US Supreme Court, but they also filed the motion with the three-judge panel to stay the decision, arguing that voters chose their legislators to serve for the next two years and that the state should not have to invest resources in a special election. On Monday, January 9, attorneys for the voters who successfully sued to throw out the 28 legislative districts urged the Supreme Court to preserve the lower court demand that boundaries be redrawn very soon. Lawyers for the state asked the Court to rule on a delay by this Wednesday, January 11, when the legislature reconvenes. They argued that legislators should not have to spend the first weeks of the session redrawing boundaries they believe ultimately will be upheld. In a decision this afternoon, January 10, the US Supreme Court has put the elections ordered by the lower court on hold for now until the Court decides whether it will hear the matter. If the Court does take the case, new elections won't be held until the Court issues its ruling. North Carolina has 50 state Senate districts and 120 state House districts. Although only 28 were found to be drawn unconstitutionally, if the final decision is that the maps be withdrawn, this will probably lead to both maps being entirely redrawn because every change to one district affects adjoining districts. (WRAL NEWS, The ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Interim DHHS Secretary Named – On January 3, Governor Cooper named Dempsey Benton interim Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Benton is the former city manager of Raleigh and served as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services under Governor Mike Easley.

NC Health News Coverage of Coalition on Aging's Meeting with DHHS Head – Thanks to Tommy Goldsmith with *NC Health News* for his [article](#) about the Coalition's dialogue session at

the December 9 membership meeting with then Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Rick Brajer. In the article, Tommy highlights Secretary Brajer's remarks that legislators should hear the priorities of older residents. At the next membership meeting on January 27, time will be spent talking about how relaying those priorities to legislators can be accomplished.

Webinar on What's Ahead in the New Year at the Federal Level – Congress is back and the new Trump administration starts on January 20. With this new beginning lie many challenges and opportunities. Repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will likely be one of the first items on the agenda which includes threats to senior programs like Medicaid home and community based services, health coverage for the pre-Medicare population aged 55-64, and threats to programs like fall prevention and chronic disease management. On January 18 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., the National Council on Aging (NCOA) Public Policy and Advocacy team will hold a webinar to share information about what lies ahead and how aging advocates can add their voice to the discussion. To register for this event click [here](#).

Dual Eligibles Advisory Committee Winding Up Work – Medicaid reform legislation (SL 2015-245) signed into law in September of 2015 required the NC Department of Health and Human Services to develop a Dual Eligibles Advisory Committee, which must include at least a reasonably representative sample of the population receiving long-term services and supports covered by Medicaid. The legislation further provided that the NC Division of Health Benefits, upon the advice of the Dual Eligibles Advisory Committee, shall develop a long-term strategy to cover dual eligible through capitated prepaid health plan (PHP) contracts and report the strategy to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and NC Health Choice by January 31, 2017. The Dual Eligibles Advisory Committee which is composed of about 35 people - advocates, health policy experts, representatives of managed care companies, health care personnel, and others – has been meeting since June to come up with recommendations for how to cover those who qualify for both Medicaid and Medicare, referred to as dual eligible, in a managed care system. Several Coalition members have served on the Advisory Committee including Coalition President Mary Bethel (also serves on the Steering Committee for this) and Immediate Past President Bill Lamb. At the end of last year, North Carolina had 319,720 dual eligibles which accounted for about 17% of the state's Medicaid population. Of this number, 235,947 received full Medicaid benefits. In the last fiscal year, the state spent \$1.1 billion, about 31% of the state's \$3.6 billion Medicaid budget, on duals. The report from the workgroup will be available in the next several weeks and will include recommendations for how to best meet the needs of this population through PHP contracts. See this [article](#) from Rose Hoban with *NC Health News* about the Advisory Committee and addressing the needs of dual eligibles.

Going the Extra Step to Honor Direct Care Workers – For many of us who work in the field of aging, our personal lives and professional lives often intersect. One common example is when we become caregivers for family or friends. Teresa Troup, Executive Director of the NC Adult Day Services Association, is a caregiver for her uncle who is now a resident of Oak Hill Living

Center, an assisted living facility located in Angier in Harnett County. While he has been at Oak Hill, Theresa has seen first-hand the loving care that her uncle receives and in December she decided to do something to help recognize the 50+ employees there who provide daily care for the 100+ residents. She coordinated an event that brought family and friends of residents at Oak Hill, community members, and state and national leaders together to show appreciation to the home's employees. During the event, creative performances by residents entertained those in attendance and staff members were presented with gift bags and small cash awards collected from residents' families and friends. Copies of thank you notes written by families were included in the gift bags. Special guests including Janet Bradbury on Sen. Richard Burr's staff; Angier Mayor Lewis Weatherspoon; Frances Messer, Executive Director of the NC Assisted Living Association; and a former Harnett County Commissioner were all on hand to extend words of appreciation. The convening of a special legislative session kept several state legislators who had planned to attend away. In talking about the event, Teresa noted that direct care workers are not paid enough for all they do, but acts of appreciation go a long way towards keeping them motivated. She hopes that other communities across our state will take the opportunity to recognize the work done by local direct care staff.



In the picture on the left, Teresa Troup and husband Garman, center, dressed the part of Mr. and Mrs. Santa Clause to help provide holiday cheer at the event honoring Oak Hill Living Center direct care workers. In the picture on the right, Frances Messer serves ice cream to guests.

Adult Care Home Groups Formed – (Special thanks to Bill Lamb, Coalition Past President and Executive Director of Friends of Resident in Long-Term Care for providing these reports).

On January 9, the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services convened a workgroup of stakeholders to assist them in developing a plan to insure adequate reimbursement for facilities serving residents receiving Special Assistance, without increasing the Medicaid eligibility limits for those receiving assistance. The legislature approved a temporary special payment of \$34 per month for each Special Assistance recipient from October 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. The report and plan is due to the General Assembly by April 1, 2017. After this initial organizing meeting, the workgroup will be meeting by-weekly though February starting January 30.

The Adult Care Licensure Section in the NC Division of Health Service Regulation has also set up a stakeholder group to discuss potential rule and statute changes related to adult care homes and family care homes. Representation is made up from industry representatives, advocates, county departments of social services and the ombudsmen program. Their primary focus will be to determine two to four agenda items, agreed upon by the group, that would require either rule or statute change-- or both; to reach consensus on those issues and develop recommended changes (including draft rule or statutory language) to take to the General Assembly or to the Medical Care Commission. The group has discussed changes to the Star Rating System and to the Informal Dispute Resolution Process in their initial meetings. Plans are to continue to meet regularly through January and February.

Legislative Priorities for the NC Retired Governmental Employees Association (NCRGES)

– The Association has 70,000 members and represents retired state and local government employees. In 2017, the NCRGES is asking the General Assembly to:

- Provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) sufficient to maintain retirees' buying power and stay abreast of the Consumer Price Index.
- Maintain the State Budget in 2017-2018 to sustain the Annual Required Contribution (ARC) to the Retirement Systems (TSERS/LGERS).
- Maintain the State funding for the State Health Plan. Continue full funding for the State Health Plan with no decrease in benefits and no required premiums for retirees on any basic plan.
- Support continuation of a Defined Benefit (DB) pension plan and oppose any trend toward a Defined Contribution (DC) plan.

Additional News and Resources of Interest:

- **Affordable Care Act (ACA) enrollment continues until January 31** – At this time, the ACA is still the law and the ACA marketplace is open for enrollment now until January 31. Free expert appointments are available all across the state for assistance in getting information and enrolling in a plan. To make an appointment, call toll-free at 1-855-733-3711 or go on-line to www.GetCoveredAmerica.org.
- As was reported in last month's *Update*, **Congress passed a second Continuing Resolution** that provides level funding for most federal programs through April 28. This means that FY 2017 funding will not be finalized until seven months into the fiscal year when Congress should be starting the FY 2018 budget. NCOA has compiled a table of

FY 2017 federal budget funding for aging services programs. To see this table, click [here](#).

- Today, a 65-year old man can expect, on average, to live until age 84.4. If a man reaches age 91, he can expect to live another four years. A 65-year old woman has an average **life expectancy** of 86.7 years. A woman age 91 can expect to live until age 95.7. (Social Security Administration Life Expectancy Calculator).
- The **estimated out-of-pocket health care costs** for a single retiree from age 65 to 85 is \$146,400. The estimated out-of-pocket costs from age 85 to 95 is \$172,400. (Yamamoto, D -2013, *Health Care Costs from Birth to Death*)
- The **deadline for North Carolinians to seek federal aid in recovering from Hurricane Matthew has been extended to January 23** due to the winter storm. Registering with FEMA is the first step in finding out eligibility for federal financial assistance.
- The January/February AARP *Bulletin* has a special report on [Why Medicare Matters – How Proposed Changes to Medicare Could Affect Your Wallet and Your Health Care](#).
- According to the NC Seniors' Health Insurance information program (SHIIP) in the NC Department of Insurance, there are **1.77 million Medicare beneficiaries in North Carolina**. Reports show that the **SHIIP program continues to be an outstanding resource for those on Medicare in our state**. In 2015, in addition to agency staff, including those in its professionally-operated call center, SHIIP had a volunteer base of 120 county coordinators and 973 volunteers who provided free, unbiased counseling about Medicare in all 100 counties. They helped 108,094 Medicare beneficiaries in one-on-one counseling sessions and hosted 7,909 public and media events.
- The Center for Medicare Advocacy will hold the **National Voices for Medicare Summit** on March 30 at the Kaiser Family Foundation at 1330 G Street, NW, in Washington, D.C. To learn more, click [here](#). The Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. is a non-profit non-partisan organization established in 1986 to provide education, advocacy, and legal assistance to help older people and people with disabilities obtain fair access to Medicare and quality health care.
- The amount of earnings subject to Social Security tax in 2017 will increase to \$127,200 which is up from \$118,500 in 2016. The hike is expected to affect about 12 million of the 173 million people paying into the Social Security system.
- According to a new report released by researchers at John Hopkins School of Medicine, more than 250,000 Americans die each year from medical blunders and safety lapses.

Those errors killed nearly twice as many Americans as accidents. Only heart disease and cancer kill more people.

- Financial exploitation is a challenge for older and vulnerable adults. A report from the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau estimates losses attributed to **fraudulent activities targeting older adults** range from \$2.9 billion to \$36.48 billion. A resource that is available to help protect older investors is the **Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Securities Helpline for Seniors (HELPS)** at 1-844-57 HELPS (1-844-574-3577). FINRA is a self-regulatory organization for the securities industry and is committed to providing financial tools and support through its online services, publications, and helpline.
- **“America, Let’s Do Lunch,”** a national PSA campaign done in partnership between Meals on Wheels America and the Ad Council, is designed to bring attention to the important role of home delivered meals. Look for ads on local media outlets in your area.
- **Meals on Wheel of Wake County has been selected for a two-year study to identify the extended benefits of the meals on wheels service to vulnerable seniors.** Six programs across the country were selected for the study which is a collaborative effort between the Gary and Mary West Health Institute, Meals on Wheels America, and a research group in the Brown University Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research. The study will investigate opportunities to improve the general health and well-being of homebound seniors by integrating health and safety screenings into daily home delivery services. The aim of the two-year program, called *More Than a Meal, Phase 3*, is to standardize reporting mechanisms and improve communication with healthcare providers to prevent an adverse health event.
- Registration is open for The Carolinas Center’s **Advanced Illness Management Summit** (former Palliative Care Symposium) that will be held on Wednesday, March 29 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill. To learn more and to register, click [here](#).
- The Administration on Aging has announced the **theme for Older Americans Month** for 2017 which is May – *Age Out Loud*. The goal is to give aging a new voice that reflects what today’s older adults have to say about aging.
- Stacy Hurley was hired by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services effective December 1 as the **No Wrong Door State Coordinator**. This is a new position approved by the General Assembly last session to assist with implementing the State Alzheimer’s Plan – Dementia Capable North Carolina. The position provides leadership to the development and implementation of a system that streamlines access to long term

services and supports for older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. Stacy will be working closely with the NC United Way 2-1-1 I&A system. Prior to assuming this position, Stacy worked in the Housing Unit at the Division as a Regional Housing Coordinator.

- Jen Teague was hired by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services effective January 3 as the Division's **Healthy Aging Specialist**. In this position, she will work on evidence based health promotion/disease prevention programs including Title III of the Older Americans Act and will serve as back-up for the nutrition program. She comes to this position from the Watauga County Project on Aging where she was Senior Center Director in Boone.
- Leslie Karjanis began work November 15 as the **Senior Community Service Employment Coordinator** for the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services. Prior to coming to the Division, she was a Benefits Counselor for the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- LaKendra Dixon began work November 29 as an **Ombudsman Program Specialist** for the NC Division of Aging and Adult Specialist. She worked with the Upper Coastal Plains Area Agency on Aging as LCA/Evidence Based Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Coordination before joining the Division.
- Yolanda Stith ended her tenure as **Executive Director of the NC Association of Long Term Care Facilities** on December 21. She has been appointed to the NC Industrial Commission. Beth Oakley, who has worked with the Association since April of 2016 as Education Manager, is serving as Interim Director.
- **Bill Pully, head of the NC Hospital Association retired the end of December.** He led the Association for 17 years and before that he was the lobbyist for the Association. Hugh Tilson, Chief Operating Officer for the Association, has been named Interim President.

Aging Programs on NPR – NPR has had a number of reports on aging issues in the last month.

To view a program, click on it. Programs include:

- [105 Year Old Cyclist Rides 14 Miles in an Hour Enroute to a World Record](#)
- [Without Any Family, Aging Adults Rely on Friends for Help](#)
- [Easing Older People's Loneliness Can Help Keep Them Healthy](#)
- [A Skeptic Fact-Checks Yoga's Health Claims and Goes with The Om](#)
- [From Psychedelics to Alzheimer's, 2016 Was a Good Year for Brain Science](#)
- [Where Does Alzheimer's Treatment Go From Here?](#)

- [A Dying Man's Wish to Donate His Organs Gets Complicated](#)
- [Opioids Can Derail the Lives of Older People, Too](#)
- [Patients Cared for By Female Doctors Fare Better Than Those Treated by Men](#)

Additional Articles/Stories:

News and Observer Op-Ed – January 10, 2017 – [How the ACA's Repeal Will Hurt North Carolina](#)

Medical News Today – January 9, 2017 - [Hour-Long Nap May Boost Mental Ability for Older Adults](#)

The Guardian – January 5, 2017 – [Living Near Heavy Traffic Increases Risk of Dementia, Scientists Say](#)

WRAL.Com – January 2, 2017 – [Medicare Launches Revamp for Heart Attacks, Hip Fractures](#)

Modern Healthcare – December 27, 2016 – [Study Finds CMS' Hospital Readmission Penalties Worked Under Affordable Care Act](#)

Associated Press – December 19, 2016 – [Medicare Outpatients Risk Higher Bills for Some Procedures](#)

News and Observer – December 19, 2017 – [Being Old Doesn't Mean You Can't Drive, Says States Reluctant to Impose Restrictions](#)

News and Observer – December 18, 2016 – [How Free Coupons for Patients Help Drugmakers Hike Drug Prices 1000%](#)

News and Observer – December 16, 2017 – [Three Things I Learned Taking Care of My Elderly Parents](#)

New York Times – December 15, 2017 – [Scientists Say the Clock of Aging May Be Reversible](#)

Washington Post Editorial – December 10, 2017 – [The GOP Could Wreck the Health Care System, and Soon](#)

Coalition Meetings for 2017 Scheduled/January Speaker Confirmed – The Coalition has set its meeting schedule for 2017. The dates are January 27, February 24, March 24, April 28, May 19, June 23, August 25, September 22 (annual meeting), October 27, and December 8. All meetings, with the exception of the September annual meeting, are scheduled for 10:00 a.m. in the first floor conference room at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (693 Palmer Drive, Taylor Hall on the Dix campus). The location for the annual meeting will be announced the first of the year. At the **January 27 meeting, guest speaker will be Theresa Matula,**

Principal Legislative Analyst with the Legislative Analysis Division of the NC General Assembly. Time will also be spent discussing plans for the work of the Coalition in 2017.

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.

Calendar of Events – If you have events or activities scheduled for 2017 that you would like to share with Coalition members, please send details about these to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com. We would like to post a master calendar of aging related events and activities on the Coalition's website.

Coalition on Aging Membership – Are you interested in getting more involved in being an advocate for older North Carolinians? If yes, consider becoming a member of the Coalition on Aging. Membership in the Coalition 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>. Membership dues notices for 2017 will be e-mailed to current Coalition members in early January. Dues for 2017 will remain the same as they were in 2016 - \$100 for agencies/organizations/groups and \$20 for supporting individuals (non-voting).

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