



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging Mid-Month Update – June 17, 2016

Work Continues on State Budget – Now that both the House and Senate have approved their proposals for the FY 16-17 state budget, a Conference Committee composed of House and Senate members has been named to iron out differences in the two plans. Click [here](#) to see a list of Conference Committee members.

Legislative leaders hope to have a budget in place by July 1, the start of the new fiscal year. The recent pace of activity at the General Assembly would indicate that legislators are on-track to adjourn the short legislative session within a few weeks. Although there is agreement on many items in the House and Senate proposals, there are a number of areas in which there is significant differences. See this article from [@NCCapitol](#) for a summary of key differences. Indications are that many of these differences have been resolved in recent days by the Committee.

Action by Aging Advocates Needed – As reported in the June 4 Update and the June 1 action alert sent to Coalition members, the Senate budget plan is not as “friendly” to several issues important to aging advocates. Specifically, the Senate budget proposal:

- Appropriates only \$300,000 to increase funding for **Project CARE** (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) to support families acting as caregivers for family members with Alzheimer’s disease. The House proposal increases this funding by \$550,000.
- Appropriates only \$1 million to expand support for Alzheimer’s patients and their families through additional slots for the **Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP-DA)**. The House proposal increases this funding by \$1.5 million.
- Does not provide funding to increase the **State-County Special Assistance rate** effective October 1, 2016 for adult care homes. The House proposes to increase the rate by \$34 to \$1,216 which was the first rate increase since 2009.
- Does not provide a cost of living adjustment (**COLA**) for **retired teachers and state employees**. The House recommends a 1.6% COLA increase. (**Correction** – In the June 1 action alert, we reported that teachers and state employees who retired in 2010 have received COLAs averaging .4% while the inflation rate for this period has been 23.5%. What this should have said is teachers and state employees who retired in 2010 have received COLAs averaging .4% (23.5% of the inflation rate).

Please continue to contact members of the Conference Committee and ask that they support the House’s recommendations in each of these four areas. If you do not have time to call everyone on the Conference Committee, please contact the Committee Chairs. Contact information for Committee members can be obtained by clicking on the link noted earlier of the list of Committee members.

Final Approval of Adult Guardianship Bill Delayed – Both the House and Senate have passed House Bill 817 (Enact Uniform Act on Adult Guardianship), but the bill was tweaked in the Senate to add several clarifying changes. We are also aware that there is one additional change being made to the bill which would change the effective date of the legislation from December 2016 to December 2017. There appears to be widespread support for the bill and it is expected to be on the calendars in both the House and Senate for final approval next week.

Legislation to Amend Silver Alert System Advances – A provision of House Bill 1044, the Law Enforcement Omnibus Bill, would make clarifying changes to GS 143B-1022, the NC Silver Alert System. It provides that the system is to be expanded to cover not only individuals who suffer from dementia but also Alzheimer’s disease, or other disabilities that require them to be protected from potential abuse, physical harm, neglect or exploitation. Previously the System was only triggered for those suffering from dementia or cognitive impairment. The provision further requires the NC Center for Missing Persons to issue a Silver Alert upon receiving a request (had been a report) involving a missing person or child with a described condition. The bill has passed the House and has been ordered engrossed and sent to the Senate.

U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Acts on Aging Services; In Surprise Move Eliminates Funding for State Health Insurance Assistance Program (Funding information provided by the NCOA, the National Council on Aging) - Last week, by a nearly unanimous vote of 29-1, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY17 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill. Although there were increases in aging services, two long-standing and important programs were significantly cut. The Committee proposed that:

- **The Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** lose all of its \$52.1 million in funding which would effectively eliminating the program. (Click [here](#) to see National Public Radio story about this proposed cut).
- **The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** lose \$34.4 million which is 8% of its funding.

The Seniors’ Health Insurance Program (SHIP) in the NC Department of Insurance is our state’s SHIP program. The program which has been in existence since 1986 has been a role model for

other states. SHIIP counsels Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers about Medicare, Medicare supplements, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Part D, and long-term care insurance.

The SHIIP counselors on the toll-free line and the 900 volunteer SHIIP counselors offer free and unbiased information regarding Medicare health care products. SHIIP also helps people recognize and prevent Medicare billing errors and possible fraud and abuse through the NC Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program. Approximately 110,000 persons are assisted by SHIIP each year.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SESEP) which is funded by the Older Americans Act provides subsidized, service-based training for low-income persons age 55+ who are unemployed and have poor employment prospects. Cuts to this program could result in fewer seniors being served or decreased income due to fewer working hours. In North Carolina, the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services and several national contractors administer the SESEP program.

Positive recommendations in the Senate Appropriations Committee budget include:

- \$2 million more for Elder Justice, equal to the Administration's request, increasing funding to \$10 million total.
- \$2 million increase for Senior Medicare Patrol, equal to the Administration's request, boosting funding to \$13.9 million.
- \$2 billion more for the National Institutes of Health, including a \$400 million increase for Alzheimer's Disease research at the National Institute on Aging.

Most other aging services were level-funded, including:

- \$5 million allocated from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) for Falls Prevention activities at the Administration for Community Living and \$2.1 million appropriated for activities at the Centers for Disease Control.
- \$8 million allocated from the PPHF for Chronic Disease Self-Management Education.
- \$347.7 million for Older Americans Act Supportive Services and Senior Centers (the Administration requested a \$10 million increase).
- \$834.8 million for Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs (the Administration requested a \$13.8 million increase)

A complete list of proposed funding levels can be found in NCOA's updated **FY17 Aging Services Funding table**.

The House Appropriations Committee has not yet taken action on its version of the FY17 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill, but it expected to do so in the next few weeks. It is important that the House not include similar cuts to SHIPs and SCSEP. NCOA has more information on its website

about the proposed cuts and the needed investments for these programs. To learn more, click on **SHIP** and **SCSEP**.

Action Needed: Contact members of the North Carolina Congressional delegation and ask them to reject the funding cuts to SHIP (Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program) and SCSEP (Senior Community Service Employment Programs). Contact information for our Senators, Sen. Richard Burr and Sen. Thom Tillis, and US House members can be found by clicking [here](#).

New Public Affairs Show – UNC-TV began a new public affairs program last month that focuses on North Carolina politics. The show called “Front Row” is hosted by Marc Rotterman, a long-time figure in national and state Republican politics. The half-hour program airs at 9:30 p.m. Fridays and repeats at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays and features Rotterman and a panel of reporters, public policy experts and politicians.

Lower Your Fitness Age – The year you were born doesn’t tell the whole story about your physical health. Research is finding that lowering something called your fitness age could be one of the best antiaging strategies. Fitness age is a measure of how fit you are, regardless of your real age. Pamela Peeke, MD, MPH, assistant professor at the University of Baltimore and author of *Body for Life for Women* and a Senior Olympic triathlete documented the impact of physical activity on fitness age by analyzing more than 4,000 Senior Olympians all of whom were over the age of 50. She found that even though the average age of the athletes was 68 years old, their average fitness age was 43. This information, of course, is music to the ears of Coalition member NC Senior Games which has for years touted the importance of physical activity for older North Carolinians.

AARP Testing Caregiver Trivia Game – From now through June 26, AARP North Carolina invites people to test a new online trivia game (AARP’s Pop Up! Family Caregiver Game!) that will help participants learn about valuable resources available to help support family caregivers and their loved ones. Just like a game show, participants play with everyone else and score points for each question answered correctly. Instant prizes are given away daily at random, and at the end of the game, one sweepstakes winner will receive a gift card. Participants earn an entry into the sweepstakes every time they answer a question. Learn how to join the game in [three easy steps](#).

Brief Notes:

- Between 2000 and 2013, the number of **older adults who died from falls** each year more than doubled growing from 10,273 to 25,464. Millions more people are injured from falls. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the medical costs of falling is more than \$30 billion a year and it may double by 2020. To read more, check out the article “Fear of Falling” by Rick Schmitt in the December 2015 *AARP Bulletin* [here](#).
- Check out **highlights from the Genworth survey** *Beyond the Dollars 2015 Survey – Exposing the True Cost of a Long Term Care Event* [here](#).
- The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services has compiled a new chart which provides an overview of **demographics and outcomes for adult protective services in North Carolina** for 2014-2015. A copy of this chart is attached to the e-mail transmitting this Update.
- The **Practice Change Leaders for Aging and Health**, a national program to develop, support and expand the influence of organizational leaders who are committed to achieving transformative improvements in care for older adults, is now accepting applications To find out more, click [here](#).
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released **new regulations for guiding Medicaid Managed Care**. On June 22, the Disability and Aging Collaborative (DCA) will hold a webinar that will provide an overview of the new regulations, as well as an analysis of relevant provisions, including enrollment, network adequacy, stakeholder engagement, beneficiary support system and quality. To find out more and to register, click [here](#).
- A call for proposals has been issued to present at the **American Society on Aging’s 2017 Aging in America Conference** that will be held in Chicago on March 20-24. Proposals are due by June 30. To find out more and to submit a proposal click [here](#).
- An article in the May 2016 *AARP Bulletin* reports that an AARP survey conducted from February 27 to March 6 found that **likely voters age 50** and over favor a Republican over a Democratic candidate for president this year by 43% to 37% and a full 20% of those surveyed stated they were still undecided, including 56% of independents. In the same survey, 97% of those polled said that making Social Security financially sound for future generations is important.
- According to the National Rifle Association (as reported in the May 2016 *AARP Bulletin*), 22,739 **people 65 and older took NRA-certified basic firearm training courses** last year. This is four times the number in 2012 and significantly higher than the 265% hike among all age groups.

Other Reports and Resources of Interest:

- From News and Observer – [Transforming Medicaid in North Carolina with Medicaid Reform](#) (an op ed by Rick Brajer, Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services)
- From News and Observer – [For Many Women, Adequate Pensions Are Still a Far Reach](#)
- From NC Health News – [Updated: Drivers with Disabilities May Find Road Ahead Cleared](#)
- From NC Health News – [Patient Advocates Push for Limits on Step Therapy Prescription Practices](#)
- From National Public Radio – [More Generics and Negotiating Leverage Could Slow Medicare Drug Spending](#)
- From National Public Radio – [Dying in Hospital Means More Procedures, Test and Costs](#)
- From WebMD – [15 Minutes of Exercise May Boost Life Span](#)

Calendar of Events – If you have conferences, workshops, or other events you would like to have posted on the Coalition’s calendar of events, please send details to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com.

May Coalition on Aging Meeting – The Coalition meeting for the month of June will be held on Friday, June 24, at 10:00 a.m. in the first floor conference room at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services located in Taylor Hall on the Dorothea Dix campus in Raleigh (693 Palmer Drive). Guest speaker for the meeting will be Tommy Goldsmith, free-lance journalist and recent retiree from the News and Observer.

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>.

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