



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

**NC Coalition on Aging
First of the Month Update – June 4, 2016**

Proposed Senate Budget Approved – Shortly after midnight on Friday, the Senate approved its budget proposal for FY 16-17 (see WRAL [@NCCapitol](#) for a report). A brief summary of highlights from the plan related to aging issues was e-mailed to Coalition members on June 1. As noted then, the Senate proposal appropriates less funding in several key areas important to aging advocates. A Conference Committee composed of House and Senate members will work to iron out differences in the House and Senate proposals. Legislative leaders have said they anticipate having an approved budget in place for the start of the new fiscal year which begins on July 1.

Comparison of House and Senate Budget Proposals – A review of both budget plans reveals there is agreement as well as disagreement among the two chambers of the legislature about funding for aging issues. In some areas where there is agreement to fund a program or initiative, there is disagreement about the funding level. Copies of the House and Senate budget proposals, including the money reports, are available on the homepage of the General Assembly's [website](#). Key items in the budget proposals are as follows:

- Funding for **Project CARE** (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) effective October 1, 2016, to support families acting as caregivers for family members with Alzheimer's disease. The increased funding would provide vouchers for respite services and three additional full-time family consultants for Project CARE. (House proposes \$550,000 in recurring funding. Senate proposes \$300,000 in recurring funding).
- Funding for two full-time equivalent staff positions within the Division of Aging and Adult Services to oversee continued development and implementation of the **No Wrong Door to Accessing Benefits** initiative. This includes **enhancement of the NC 2-1-1 database and management of the Alzheimer's disease and dementia-related stakeholders partnerships**. (\$200,000 in recurring funding in both the House and Senate plans).
- Funding to the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a **pilot program to increase access to Food and Nutrition benefits** for individuals who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid through outreach and assistance with completion of the Food and Nutrition Services applications. (\$600,000 in non-recurring funding in both the House and Senate plans).
- Funding to increase the **State-County Special Assistance rate** effective October 1, 2016, to \$1,216 for adult care homes. This is a \$34 increase. The rate has not been increased

since 2009. (House proposes \$3,750,000 in recurring funding. Senate does not have any funding for this).

- Funding for **Medicaid** for the projected increase in the number of **individuals receiving State-County Special Assistance** due to the increase in the income eligibility level effective October 1, 2016. Individuals receiving State-County Special Assistance are automatically eligible for Medicaid. (House proposes \$4,100,000 in recurring funding. Senate does not have any funding for this).
- Funding to support Alzheimer's patients and their families through additional slots for the **Community Alternative Program for Disabled Adults (CAP-DA)**. (House proposes \$1,500,000 in recurring funding. Senate proposes \$1,000,000 in recurring funding).
- Funding to reinstate **Medicaid coverage for routine eye examinations for adults** effective January 1, 2017. (Senate proposes \$2,143,564 in recurring funding. House does not have any funding for this).
- Funding for a **cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retired teachers and state employees**. (House proposes a 1.6% COLA increase. Senate does not propose an increase).
- Funding for the **Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)** for FY 16-17 is reduced from the \$39,303,674 budgeted last year to \$37,156,492 due to a reduction in federal funding. (This is the same in both the House and Senate plans).
- Funding to the **NC Department of Insurance's Consumer Assistance Group** for three full-time equivalent positions (two in the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program) to assist individuals with insurance inquiries. (House proposes \$182,895 in recurring funding. Senate does not have any funding for this).
- The Housing Finance Agency is authorized to expend receipts transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services for the **Community Living Housing Fund (CLHF)**. These funds increase access to permanent, community-based integrated housing for individuals with disabilities, directly supporting the Olmstead Settlement. Requirements for the CLHF are increased from \$0 to \$5,519,750, as are receipts. The revised net appropriation for CLHF is \$0. (This is the same in both the House and Senate plans).
- The House proposes increased funding for the **Medical Review Program in the NC Division of Motor Vehicles** (\$1,709,465 in recurring funding and \$151,900 in non-recurring funding) to add 21 contract nurses, 4 full-time Processing Assistant IV, and 3 full-time Administrative Assistant I positions to implement reform initiatives and service enhancements. The Senate proposes \$1,312,636 in recurring funding for the Medical Review Program for contracted medical reviews and includes a special provision which details specifics related to the Medical Review Program.
- Funding for the **Rural Operating Assistance Program in the Public Transportation Division** for rural transit system operating assistance (House proposes an increase of \$2 million. Senate proposes an increase of \$3 million).

- Funding for the **State Maintenance Assistance Program in the Public Transportation Division** for urban transit system operating assistance. (House proposes an increase of \$2 million in recurring funding. Senate proposes an increase of \$1 million in recurring funding).

Additional special provisions in the budget of special interest to aging advocates include:

- Provision to extend the **moratorium on home care agency licenses for in-home aide services**. (House extends to June 30, 2017. Senate extends to June 30, 2019).
- Provision to change **adult care home cost reporting** from annually to at least every two years. (Same in both the House and Senate plans).
- Provision which allows the Medicaid program to do **estate recovery from a designated beneficiary's ABLE account** following the death of a beneficiary who received medical assistance benefits. (Same in both the House and Senate plans)
- Provision to **remove the sunset on the Medicaid eligibility/COLA disregard**. The disregard for a Medicaid recipient's increase in income due solely to a cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security or Railroad Retirement payments was set to expire effective December 31, 2017 per session law 2012-142. The provision removes the sunset clause so COLA's will be disregarded ongoing for determining Medicaid eligibility. (Same in both the House and Senate plans).
- Provision to rename the **Black Mountain Veterans Home** the Zebulon Doyle Alley State Veterans Home. (Same in both the House and Senate plans).
- Provision to authorize the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to **study the creation of a North Carolina Military Hall of Fame**. (In Senate plan only).
- Provision to change the days of the week (from Monday through Sunday to Monday through Friday except when the day for services falls on a state or federal holiday) for **burial at State Veterans Cemeteries**. (In Senate plan only).

You are encouraged to contact your legislators to express your views regarding budget provisions and funding levels. Contact information for Senators can be found [here](#) and for House members information can be found [here](#).

Adult Guardianship Bill Moves Forward – House Bill 817 (Enact Uniform Act on Adult Guardianship) passed the Senate Judiciary II Committee on May 26 with a few technical changes. The bill is scheduled to be on the Senate calendar for Wednesday, June 8. An additional clarifying amendment is expected to be offered.

Medicaid Reform Waiver on the Way to the Feds – On Wednesday, June 1, following a presentation to the House Health Committee by the Department of Health and Human Services on the finalized Medicaid reform proposal, Governor Pat McCrory signed a waiver request to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services seeking approval to move forward with reform provisions. The reform proposal would shift the state’s Medicaid program from fee-for-service to private managed care. It is anticipated that the review of the waiver request by federal officials will take approximately 18 months. A [story](#) by the News and Observer’s Under the Dome section provides more details.

Challenge to North Carolina Congressional Map Rejected – On June 2, a panel of three federal judges rejected the challenge to the state’s new Congressional map. State legislators drew the new Congressional district map in February after the judges ruled the previous map relied too much on the race of potential voters when they set the boundaries of two of North Carolina’s 13 U.S. House districts in 2011. This latest ruling which puts the new map in place comes just in time for Tuesday’s Congressional primary. To read more on this, check out the article at [@NCCapitol](#).

WRAL.com Resource Provides Data on Legislators – On May 25, WRAL.com rolled out a new feature which makes data about members of the N.C. General Assembly easily accessible. Among the information that can be accessed is legislative profile, voting record, campaign contributions, and annual conflict of interest disclosures. To find out more about this resource, click [here](#).

Network Adequacy Standards for Health Insurance Products – In 2015, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners adopted a new model act pertaining to network adequacy standards for health insurance products. North Carolina now has the opportunity to pursue new or amended adequacy standards to apply to health insurance products offered in our state. To facilitate that opportunity, the Department is convening several stakeholder groups to discuss the model and what standards might be appropriate for North Carolina. Mary Bethel, President of the Coalition, is participating in the consumer advocates workgroup.

Affordable Options for Hearing Loss Urged – On June 2, a committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine which was chaired by Dr. Dan Blazer from Duke urged more affordability and accessibility to hearing health care. As reported in news coverage about the committee’s work, about 30 million Americans have hearing loss which is a problem that increases as people pass middle age. With a rapidly graying population, hearing loss is a growing public health problem that can leave older adults socially isolated and even increase their risk for dementia. The price of hearing aids is cited as a reason that only a small fraction of older adults who might benefit from hearing aids use them. Recommendations from the committee included the following:

- Medicare should evaluate options to provide coverage for a range of hearing loss treatments and services, including hearing aids.
- The Food and Drug Administration should allow over-the-counter sales of wearable devices for mild hearing problems.
- Hearing tests should be part of routine check-ups, including the annual Medicare wellness visit.
- Unbundle or provide prices separately for hearing aid devices and the professional services to fit and adjust them to allow for better consumer decision-making.

To read more about this click [here](#).

Brief Notes

- Natalie P. Miller (Law Offices of Natalie J. Miller, PLLC) from Mooresville is the incoming **Chair** (effective July 1) **of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section** of the N.C. Bar Association.
- June 15 is **World Elder Abuse Day**.
- June is **Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month**. As a way of showing commitment to ending Alzheimer's disease, many communities across the state will participate in The Longest Day, an event to honor those who face this disease. Longest Day events are often held on June 20, the summer solstice.
- According to **America's Health Rankings 2016 Senior Report**, which ranks each state's seniors in terms of physical health, food insecurity, hospice care, and other factors, North Carolina is the 30th healthiest state for older adults. To find out more, click [here](#).
- The **Triangle Caregiver Conference** will be held in two locations in June (same conference, your choice of dates). Dates are June 21 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh and on June 28 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Durham Convention Center in Durham. The cost is \$10 for caregivers and \$50 for professionals (includes approved CEUs) and includes lunch and all sessions. Register at trianglecaregiversconference.org. The Hotline to call for more information is (919) 719-6765.
- The **Pew Research Center** reports that about 57 million Americans live in an **intergenerational home**. That's more than 18% of the population and the number is more than double what it was in 1980.
- The **Census Bureau's annual report on municipal population** shows uneven growth in North Carolina which exceeded 10 million residents last year. About 41% of the 552 North Carolina communities counted by the Census Bureau lost population last year. Raleigh's population was an estimated 451,066 last July 1 making it the 42nd largest city in the country. Eight of the 25 fastest growing municipalities in North Carolina last year were in the Triangle. Charlotte's population grew to 827,097 making it the 17th largest city in the country.

- **Healthy Aging Begins at Home** is a new report released by the Bipartisan Policy Center that outlines policy recommendations to help older adults stay healthy and independent in their own homes. A copy of the report can be downloaded [here](#).
- The **National Council on Aging (NCOA) is hiring** for three positions in their headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. To find out more go [here](#).
- Saint Augustine’s University in Raleigh is partnering with AT & T to offer a **Digital Learning Program for people 55 and older who live in southeast Raleigh**. The program will offer instruction on topics such as direct messaging, social media, completing online applications and SKYPE interviews. Two sessions will be offered in the evenings on June 14 and 16 and June 21 and 23. Dinner will be provided and there will be no charge to participants. To find out more or to register, contact murphy.quintin@gmail.com.

Other Reports and Resources of Interest:

- From National Public Radio – [“Could Thinking Positively About Aging Be The Secret of Health?”](#)
- From National Public Radio – [“Baby Boomers Will Become Sicker Seniors Than Earlier Generations”](#)
- From WebMD – [“Elderly Benefit from Intensive BP Treatment”](#)
- From the News and Observer – [“More of Us Are Living to 100, Happily and Actively”](#)
- From the News and Observer – [“Elderly Book End-of-Life Talks Once Labeled Death Panels”](#)
- From the News and Observer – [“Recognizing End Point of Medicine Isn’t Immortality”](#)

Comings and Goings:

- **Tommy Goldsmith** retired from the News and Observer the end of May after 13 years in the newsroom. Tommy has worn many hats at the paper including being the Generations reporter, Wake County editor, and weekend editor. He has done many great and timely stories about aging issues over the years and will be missed. Tommy will still remain active as a free-lance journalist. He is also a great musician and plays frequently in the Triangle. We look forward to continuing to cross paths with Tommy.
- **Alice Watkins** retired on May 13 as Executive Director of Alzheimer’s North Carolina. She has been a visible and effective advocate and leader for almost 30 years for raising awareness about Alzheimer’s disease, for offering creative programs to support caregivers, and for promoting research to end the disease. Congratulations to Alice on her retirement.
- Well know consumer advocate and lobbyist **Julia Adams-Scheurich** has left the position as Director of Government Relations for The Arc of North Carolina and has formed her

own lobbying group which will focus on health care and education issues. Her new contact information is juliamarieadams@gmail.com and (919) 210-4315. Julia has been a good friend and ally to the Coalition and we wish her well.

- **Cara Townsend** joined AARP North Carolina on May 23 as Associate State Director serving the Triad area. Cara has served four members of Congress and was selected as a Presidential Appointee in Congressional Affairs for the George W. Bush Administration. Most recently, she served on the staff of Governor Pat McCrory. Cara has been a frequent attendee at Coalition meetings, and we look forward to having continuing contact with her in her new role. As we reported previously, also coming on board for AARP North Carolina on May 23 was **Rebecca Chaplin** who will serve as Associate State Director for the mountain region of the state. Cara and Rebecca will work to extend AARP's services across the state.

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.

June 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).

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/>.