



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging June Update (Part 1) – June 13, 2017

Legislative Session Winding Down (Perhaps) – [Budget negotiations](#) between the state House and Senate continue this week and there is some speculation that an agreement on the budget plan for the next two years will be announced by the end of the week. Committee meetings are also picking up this week which is another indication that loose ends are being tied up so the session can wind down. A number of [bills](#) have already become law this session and before weeks end, that number is expected to grow.

Voting Map Update Following Supreme Court Decision – Governor Cooper and Republican legislative leaders continue to wrangle over voting maps as the [special legislative session](#) called by the Governor last week to redraw maps was ignored by the General Assembly. Bickering aside, the three judge federal panel that will make the ruling about when new voting maps will be due and whether or not the state will hold a special election this year or wait until the next regular cycle of elections in 2018 has notified all parties involved in this process to prepare pleadings. A final ruling from the federal panel is expected in the coming weeks.

Judge Rules for State Retirees in Health Insurance Premium Litigation – A state trial judge has ruled that it was wrong to require retired state workers and teachers to begin paying health insurance premiums six years ago. In 2012, retirees sued after the state legislature directed the state employee health insurance plan to mandate that they make monthly contributions to receive what had been standard insurance coverage for decades. In the ruling, Superior Court Judge Edwin Wilson noted that retirees had a contractual right as part of their work agreement to receive the standard coverage without a premium. He ordered the state to reimburse retirees for premium payments they made to retain the “80/20” plan and offer that plan as it existed in 2011 premium-free for the rest of their lives. To read more about this, click [here](#). A News and Observer editorial can also be found [here](#).

Voter ID Appeal Rejected – On May 15, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal by state Republican’s to reinstate key provisions of the state’s 2013 elections law overhaul which included voter identification requirements and other restrictions on voting. In rejecting the appeal, the Court left in place the ruling last summer by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals which struck down the photo ID requirement to vote in person as well as provisions reducing the number of early voting days and prohibiting same-day registration during the early voting period.

[NC Public Radio](#) and [News and Observer](#) stories provide more information about the Court ruling.

[Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) Report on Obamacare Repeal Bill](#) – The CBO report on the cost and coverage impact of the American Health Care Act, the House Republicans’ bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, would increase the number of uninsured by 14 million in 2018, growing to 23 million by 2026. Learn more about this and 14 additional quick facts from the CBO report by clicking [here](#).

[National Council on Aging \(NCOA\) Call in Day on “No to Medicaid Cuts and Caps”](#) – NCOA is reporting this week that the U.S. Senate may try to fast-track a health care repeal bill that would make large cuts to Medicaid and cap payments to states. In response to this, NCOA is encouraging aging advocates to call their U.S. Senators at 1-866-426-2631 on Wednesday, June 14, to tell them to vote **NO** on Medicaid cuts and caps. NCOA notes that 6.9 million seniors rely on Medicaid and Medicaid pays for over 60% of the nation’s long-term care costs. To find out more, click [here](#).

[Ending Jobs Programs for Older Adults Get Press](#) – As reported earlier, President Trump is proposing to eliminate funding in FY18 for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SESEP), the nation’s only job training and placement program specifically for older adults. Last year SESEP provided on-the-job training to 70,000 older adults who provided nearly 36 million hours of staff support to 30,000 organizations. On May 25, numerous media sources across the country, including WRAL TV in Raleigh, picked up on a [story](#) about how ending the SESEP program would cause hardship for program participants. Additional information about SESEP which is available in 98 counties in North Carolina can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

[RAISE Family Caregiver Act Advances](#) – On May 11, the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions advanced the [Recognize, Assist, Include, Support and Engage \(RAISE\) Family Caregiver Act \(S. 1028\)](#). The bill which was introduced by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Aging, in early May is aimed at improving support for family caregivers. The bill would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to create, maintain, and update a National Family Caregiver Strategy. The strategy would identify specific actions that state and federal government agencies, healthcare providers, communities, employers and others can take to support family caregivers. Some of the suggested actions include service planning, adoption of family centered care in health services, respite options, and workplace policies that allow caregivers greater flexibility.

[Rep. Donna White Coming to Upcoming Coalition Meeting](#) – We are pleased that Rep. Donna White (R Johnston) will be the guest speaker at the June Coalition meeting that will be held on Friday, June 23, at 10:00 a.m. in room 104 of the Brown Building which is located at 801 Biggs Drive on the Dix Campus (site of the last several meetings). She will share

comments about what is going on at the legislature including updates on budget deliberations if the budget has not been released. Rep. White is a registered nurse and aging specialist who worked at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services prior to joining the General Assembly this session. She has become a go to person for aging and health related legislation.

Mark Your Calendar for Coalition's Annual Meeting – The Coalition's 2017 annual meeting will be held on Friday, September 22, at 12:00 noon (registration at 11:30 a.m.) at the NC State University Club located at 4200 Hillsborough Street in Raleigh. This is the same location as last year's meeting. Keynote speaker this year will be [Dr. James H. Johnson Jr.](#) who is the William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor for strategy and entrepreneurship at the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School. He is also director of the Urban Investment Strategies Center at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise where he started the [Elder Care Economy Innovations Hub](#). Dr. Johnson is a much sought after speaker and we are pleased that he has agreed to address our meeting. Registration information about the meeting will be available next month.

Handling Extreme Heat and Associated Risks – As summer approaches, the Administration for Community Living offers these steps to help prepare to handle periods of extreme heat and the associated risks:

- Consider how potential power outages during periods of extreme heat might affect you. Plan to be temporarily self-sufficient if the electricity goes out. It's possible that you will not have access to a medical facility or a pharmacy.
- Identify the resources you use on a daily basis and what you can do if they are limited or not available. Make provisions for medications that require refrigeration, and plan arrangements to get to a cooling center, if needed.
- Think about what you need to maintain your health, safety, and independence. [Build a kit](#) that includes any specialized items such as extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, and medication. Also include non-perishable food and water, items for service animals and pets, a cooler, and anything else you might need.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who do not have air conditioning, especially those who spend much of their time alone, or are more likely to be affected by extreme heat.
- Be watchful for signs of heat stroke and dehydration. These include shallow breathing, a lack of perspiration, dizziness, dry mouth, and headaches.

Oral Health Resource – The Administration for Community Living (ACL) and Office on Women's Health (OWH) have launched their first website focused on helping communities to promote the oral health of older adults. Users will be able to find nearly 200 community-based oral health programs through the site's searchable database, as well as an Oral Health Guide designed to help local organizations start or enhance their own programs. The need for

maintaining good oral health and getting regular check-ups is widely recognized, but there are often large gaps in availability and accessibility of services for older adults, particularly for older women given their longevity and economic resources. Through this new resource, ACL and OWH aim to help close those gaps and assist communities, governments, and other organizations in improving access to high quality oral health care for older adults. Both the database and Oral Health Guide are now available at <https://oralhealth.acl.gov>.

Older Adult Foot Care – Our feet change with age as circulation gets slower, joints become stiffer, and the natural cushioning gets thinner. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to take good care of your feet. According to a recent article in *Renew* magazine distributed to members of United Healthcare, here are pointers for good foot care. (1) Make sure the shoe fits. Good fitting shoes can reduce the risk of falls. But too tight-shoes can rub your feet and lead to bunions, calluses and corns. When shopping, get measured for fit and choose flat shoes with support and traction. Feet tend to swell as the day goes on, so shop later in the day to make sure the shoe fits well. (2) Add some pressure. Got achy feet or varicose veins? Look into compression socks, which can ease discomfort, improve blood flow and may help prevent blood clots. (3) Stay active. Sitting for long periods can affect blood flow, contributing to varicose veins, swollen ankles and blood clots. Get up and take a walk or do regular foot exercises. When you do sit, elevate your feet and avoid crossing your legs. (4) Diabetics, be extra vigilant. Diabetes can damage nerves, making it harder to feel irritations in the feet. And even seemingly minor issues may cause infections that can lead to amputation, according to the American Diabetes Association. Good hygiene is key: Wash your feet daily, pat them dry (especially between toes), moisturize (but not between toes), wear clean natural-fiber socks and always wear comfortable shoes. Check your feet daily for anything unusual (cuts, redness, swelling) and talk with your doctor as needed.

Issue Briefs on Revised Nursing Facility Regulations – Consumer Voice, along with the Center for Medicare Advocacy and Justice in Aging, has released three new briefs in their issue brief series, “A Closer Look at the Revised Nursing Facility Regulations.” They are as follows: (1) **Return to Facility After Hospitalization** - This brief explains bed hold rights when a resident returns to a facility after a hospitalization. The brief provides information on advance notification of bed hold rights and residents' rights if they return to a facility after a bed hold period has been exceeded. (2) **Grievances and Resident/Family Councils** - This brief covers the resident's right to file grievances and the facility's requirement to work to resolve those concerns promptly. Each facility must have a grievance policy and provide residents with information on how to file a grievance. Also, residents have a right to form a resident council, and family members and resident representatives have the right to form a family council. The facility must act upon council concerns and recommendations. (3) **Quality of Care** - The substantive requirements for quality of care are retained in the revised regulations, and CMS has affirmed the regulations' goals of supporting person-centered care and enabling each resident to attain his or her highest level of well-being. This brief covers those regulations as well as

providing information on how the quality of care provisions have been reorganized in the revised regulations.

Brief Notes and Updates:

- **NC 2-1-1**, in partnership with AARP North Carolina (both Coalition members) has produced a new [PSA](#) entitled “**Helping Take Care of Loved Ones**” which highlights how NC 2-1-1 can help connect families to needed resources.
- Since 2014, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) has funded over 60 community based organizations nationwide to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach and comprehensive application assistance to low-income seniors. In North Carolina, NCOA has partnered with the **Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina**, a Feed America member, and to date 900 older adults have been helped to apply for food stamps through this partnership. To learn more about this, click [here](#). The Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina is a Coalition member.
- On May 24, the advocacy group **Disability Rights of North Carolina** filed suit against the state, the Department of Health and Human Services and Secretary Mandy Cohen for wrongfully segregating people with developmental disabilities in institutions or putting them at risk of institutionalization because of budget restrictions and inattention to their needs. Disability Rights want the state to fully fund a Medicaid program that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live outside institutions and require regional mental health offices to pay for services individuals need. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- **Dr. Ben Bahr**, the William C. Friday Chair and Distinguished Professor of Microbiology and Biochemistry at UNC-Pembroke, is the **recipient of the 2017 Oliver Max Gardner Award** which is given by the University of North Carolina to recognize faculty who have “made the greatest contribution to the welfare of the human race.” Dr. Bahr is recognized for his Alzheimer’s research.
- The NC Secretary of State’s Office is spearheading a **public awareness campaign** to warn the public about the dangers of counterfeit prescription drugs sold by bogus online pharmacies. The campaign is alerting consumers that there is now a website, **verifybeforeyoubuy.org**, where they can check whether the online pharmacy they are considering buying medication from is legitimate. The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy and the FDA report that 97% of online pharmacies at any given time are fake. To find out more about the public awareness campaign, click [here](#).

- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, the state’s largest health insurer, is proposing a **22.9% rate increase in Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans** in 2018. Blue Cross is the only health insurer that offers ACA plans in all 100 North Carolina counties. Ninety-four percent of the approximate 502,000 people in the state insured by Blue Cross through the federal exchange qualify for a federal subsidy to help offset the cost of the monthly premium so they will not feel the full brunt of the rate increase. To read more on this, click [here](#).
- The **NC Rural Center** has recently debuted an online [database](#) which shows the economic impact of **closing North Carolina’s health insurance coverage gap**. The database provides an overview of the uninsured population in each county in the state and reviews the economic importance of closing the coverage gap for local economies.
- As reported last month, **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** will take place on June 15, 2017. This is a global campaign by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations to help promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older adults while raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect. In conjunction with this initiative, numerous media outlets and business are taking the opportunity to educate the public about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults. Click [here](#) to see a news release issued by the State Employees’ Credit Union.
- The FrameWorks Institute has two new resources that can help to **raise awareness of elder abuse and build public and political support for systematic solutions** to it. [Strengthening the Support](#) lays out an evidence-based communications strategy to introduce and define elder abuse as a matter of collective concern and advance systemic solutions to it, and [Talking Elder Abuse](#) shows how to apply the research in communications practice.
- The two most recent editions of the **North Carolina Medical Journal** have numerous articles of interest to those working with older adults. The March/April Journal focuses on [Hearing and Vision in North Carolina: Screening, Preventing, and Preserving](#) and the May/June edition examines [Beyond the Counter: Pharmacists’ Expanding Role in Health Care](#).
- Effective June 10, 2017, **Social Security began using a second method to check the identification of my Social Security** account holders when they register or sign in as a means to better protect accounts from unauthorized use and potential identity theft. This

second method of identification is in addition to the first layer of security, a username and password. After June 10, when a person signs in, they will be able to choose either their cell phone or e-mail address as their second identification method. To read more on this, click [here](#).

- The [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reports](#) that of the **\$1.4 trillion spent on health care in 2013**, about 38% of spending was for ambulatory care while about 28% was for hospital inpatient care and 22% was for prescription medicines.
- The National Institute on Aging has an [infographic](#) which shows the **difference between normal aging issues and Alzheimer's**.
- The **Administration for Community Living (ACL)** has received several complaints of persons receiving e-mails falsely claiming to be from the ACL and Edwin Walker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging, requesting personal and financial information. These e-mails are a scam. ACL never requests consumer's Social Security numbers or payment for any benefits.
- Another **scam targeted to older adults involves solicitations by mail and phone** to order items such as knee braces and other assistive devices. The consumer is told that all they need to do is provide their Medicare information and the device will be sent to them. They may receive a cheap device but the "company" could bill Medicare for more than the one sent to the consumer and they can continue to bill Medicare for products never ordered or sent. Medicare has strict coverage rules for services and supplies:
 - Never respond to open solicitations for Medicare-covered supplies/services
 - Only provide your Medicare number to health care providers or facilities at the time you are actively seeking service.
 - Carefully monitor your Medicare statements for any claims for services or supplies billed to you which you did not receive.
 - Set up an account at [MyMedicare.gov](#) and access your claim information online at any time.
 - If you think you have been billed for services and supplies that you did not order or receive, call your Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at 1-855-408-1212 to report the incident.

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/>.