



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

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



Greetings on this St. Patrick's Day edition of the Update. Hope it is a special day.

Coalition Day at the Legislature will be held on May 10. Look for an e-mail from Teresa Troup, chair of the Coalition's committee planning for this special day, in the next few days with more details.

Coalition's Legislative Priorities – A special flyer has been developed on the Coalition's priorities for the 2016 short legislative session. This flyer is being posted on the Coalition's website <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/> this week. On March 15, we communicated these priorities to the co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. This Committee will be voting on their recommendations for legislative action in the short session at its next meeting on April 12.

Coalition Banner – We are pleased to report that the Coalition has a new banner which portrays the diversity of older adults in North Carolina and conveys the message that we are coming together to advocate for our state's older citizens. Look for the banner at events and activities as we seek to increase awareness about the Coalition and our mission.

Social Security Quick Facts – AARP has produced state fact sheets on Social Security and its impact on each state's residents and the economy of the state. To view the fact sheets go to <http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/economics/info-2014/2014-social-security-quick-fact-sheets.html>. According to the fact sheet for North Carolina:

- One in five residents of the state receive Social Security
- Social Security generates \$45.2 billion dollars in economic output for North Carolina
- The average yearly Social Security benefit for a North Carolina retiree in 2012 was \$14,952.

- Nearly 51% of the state's 65+ population would have income below the poverty line if they did not receive Social Security.

Alzheimer's State Plan Released – The Plan which was developed by a Task Force convened by the NC Institute of Medicine was presented to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services on March 8.

Here is a picture of some of the Task Force members, Institute of Medicine staff, and the wife of Coach Dean Smith (she presented at the Committee meeting) who were present for the Committee meeting. Several members of the Coalition served on the Task Force.



The Plan has received good reviews, and its release has generated significant press coverage. Here is a sampling of some of the press:

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/news/2016/03/9/nc-institute-recommends-alzheimer-s-strategy.html>

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article64884207.html>

<http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2016/03/09/dean-smiths-wife-urges-lawmaker-attention-to-dementia/>

<http://www.wral.com/smith-s-wife-to-advocate-for-investments-in-dementia-care/15498724/>

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/editorials/article65687302.html>

http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/increased-migration-to-nc-drives-increase-in-with-health-care/article_3f111f9c-20f3-5fe1-ad67-848581695e44.html

Bring the Vote Home - At the February Coalition on Aging meeting, Tracy Colvard with the Association for Home and Hospice Care of North Carolina shared information about Bring the Vote Home. Tracy reports that this initiative was first launched in 2012 and is a voluntary community initiative dedicated to assisting homebound seniors and disabled Americans, their family members, and their home health caregivers to exercise their right to vote. The North Carolina Association will participate in this initiative. He notes that home based providers and beneficiaries make up a rapidly growing portion of the population, and their concerns and values should be heard and reflected by all elected officials. Bring the Vote Home seeks to make that goal a reality. Bring the Vote Home 2016 is dedicated to helping homebound citizens and their family members overcome obstacle so they can participate in the nation's important national and state elections by assisting them with voter registration services. This assistance is available without regard to political preference. More details on this initiative will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead.

Age of Disruption 2016 Tour Comes to North Carolina – Nationally known geriatrician, Dr. Bill Thomas, created the tour (according to his website) to bring a radical new approach and conversation to growth and aging. The tour features [*Disrupt Dementia*](#), a community-based workshop, and Dr. Thomas' signature “non-fiction theater” performance, [*Life's Most Dangerous Game*](#), featuring the unconventional pairing of a physician (Dr. Thomas) and a musician, [*Nate Silas Richardson*](#). The workshop and theatre performance will be held on April 20 at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in Charlotte and on April 21 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill. To find out more go to <https://drbillthomas.org/news/age-of-disruption-2016-world-tour-lineup/>.

Federal Deficit Reduction Plan Passes House Committee – On Wednesday, March 16, the Ways and Means Committee of the US House of Representatives passed a plan to eliminate the federal budget deficit without tax increases. The plan would rely on sharp cuts to federal health care programs, government aid to the poor, and hundreds of domestic programs supported by lawmakers in both parties. The plan's biggest proposed cuts are to health care programs. It proposes to eliminate “Obamacare” coverage for millions of people, slash Medicaid, raise the eligibility age for Medicare to 67, and transform Medicare into a voucher-like system for future retirees. It also proposes significant cuts and new work requirements for food stamp benefits and would eliminate the Social Services Block Grant which provides flexible grants to states for services to low income persons. Implementing the cuts would require follow-up legislation but, in reality, would be futile as long as President Barack Obama is President. This, however, could be a template for what Congress might seek to cut if there is a Republican controlled Congress and White House. To read more on this go to http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/APFN_US_CONGRESS_BUDGET?SITE=SCAND&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT.

Federal Caregiver Tax Credit Legislation Introduced – Bipartisan legislation has been introduced by Representatives Tom Reed (R-NY) and Linda Sanchez (D-CA) to provide a

caregiver tax credit of up to \$3,000 to reimburse caregivers for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while caring for an aging or disabled relative. The Credit for Caring Act of 2016 is HR 4708 and it can be viewed at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4708>.

Report Calls for Long-Term Financing Reform – The Long-Term Care Financing Collaborative has issued a new report ([Read the report](#)) that makes recommendations to improve the financing of long-term services and supports through private and public reforms. In the report, the Collaborative proposes:

- Clear private and public roles for long-term care financing.
- A new universal catastrophic long-term care insurance program that would shift today’s welfare-based system to an insurance model.
- Redefining Medicaid long-term care services and supports to empower greater autonomy and choice in services and settings.
- Encouraging private long-term care insurance initiatives to lower cost and increase enrollment.
- Increasing retirement savings and improving public education on long-term care costs and needs.

Senator Tillis Signs-On to Letter Calling for Demonstration Program to Support

Caregivers – On March 4, our US Senator Thom Tillis signed on to a letter to Andrew Slavitt, Acting Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), asking CMS to work to implement a demonstration program to more fully evaluate the impacts providing Alzheimer’s disease support services to caregivers would have on Medicare beneficiaries diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. Senator Tillis and the other Senators who signed the letter were particularly interested in evaluating the impact of delaying or reducing the beneficiaries use of institutional long-term care and other health care services. Please take the time to thank Senator Tillis for signing on to the letter.

Accountable Health Communities Funding Opportunity Extended – The opportunity to apply for federal funding from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to implement an Accountable Health Communities Model has been extended to May 18. The Accountable Health Communities (AHC) Model is a new model that examines whether systematically identifying and attempting to address health-related social needs of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries through referral and community navigation services can impact health care costs, reduce inpatient and outpatient health care utilization, and improve health care quality and delivery. To learn more go to <https://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/ahcm/faq.html>.

Retirement System Boards of Trustees Make Recommendations – In January, both the Local Governmental Employees’ Retirement System and the Teachers’ and the State Employees’ Retirement System Boards of Trustees made recommendations for employer contribution rates and cost of living adjustments for local and state retirees. Both Boards focused on stabilizing the employer contribution rates to better manage the projected increased cost to fund the annual required contribution for both systems. Coalition members, the NC Retired Governmental Employees Association (<http://www.ncrgea.com/>) and the State Employees Association of North Carolina (<http://www.seanc.org/>) can be contacted for more information about this.

How to Make Your Money Last: The Indispensable Retirement Guide is the name of a new book by long time personal finance expert Jane Bryant Quinn. Check out an interview with her on March 8 on the Diane Rehm show on National Public Radio at <https://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2016-03-08/jane-bryant-quinn-how-to-make-your-money-last> where she talks about the best ways to fill the gap between your expenses and income during your later years.

New Technologies Help to Keep Older Drivers Safe – Two new studies by the American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety and the University of Michigan Transportation Research Council found that advanced automotive technologies and safe driving habits can help older motorists remain behind the wheel longer. Researchers examined 16 advanced vehicle technologies and found that six of them can provide high value for older adults by potentially reducing crashes and improving the comfort of driving. These are:

- Forward collision warning/mitigation which helps prevent crashed by warning drivers of a potential collision or by automatically applying the brakes.
- Automatic crash notification.
- Park assist with rearview display which includes backup cameras and obstacle detection warning systems.
- Parking assist with cross-traffic warning which utilizes radar sensor technology to notify drivers of crossing vehicles when backing out of a parking space.
- Semi-autonomous parking assistance which takes over steering while moving into a parallel parking space.
- Navigation assistance.

Bob Vila's 10 Commandments of Staying in Your Home – Bob Vila, the popular host and producer of home improvement TV shows, provided these Commandments in the publication “Renew” which is distributed by UnitedHealthcare. They are:

1. Limit the steps. If possible, make the entry to your home step-free.
2. Go low maintenance. Opt for vinyl siding, metal roofing and composite decking.
3. Improve furniture. Choose furniture, appliances and cabinetry that require little or no bending and are easy to use and access.
4. Choose smart appliances – for example, stoves that beep when they turn on and off.
5. Bathe safely. Opt for a higher toilet and install bars to hold on to while getting in and out of the shower or bath.
6. Go hands-free. Touch-free sinks allow for ease of use.
7. Ditch the throw rugs – they are a tripping hazard.
8. Master the stairs. If you have to have stairs, cover them with slip-resistant material. Consider installing a second banister.
9. Up the lighting. Install fixtures or lamps in darker spots in your home. Reinstall light switches at a more comfortable height.
10. First-floor master bedroom. A main-floor master suite can cut your need to navigate stairs.

News from the World of State Politics – Several things of note from this week:

- Holly Grange won the Republican primary for House District 20 (part of New Hanover County). With no Democrat in the race it is assumed that she will be the new representative for the seat previously held by Rep. Rick Catlin.
- Guilford County school board veteran Amos Quick won the Democratic primary in House District 58 (part of Guilford County) over incumbent Ralph Johnson who suffered a stroke in February and cancelled all public appearances.
- Former state Senator Earline Parmon, a Democrat from Winston-Salem, died in Winston-Salem on March 15. She served in the House before moving over to the Senate. All total, she served in the state legislature from 2003 to 2015 when she resigned to work for US Representative Alma Adams’ campaign. While in the General Assembly, she was a great supporter of issues important to older adults.
- The idea of redistricting reform may be catching on with more people. The increased publicity about the pending litigation regarding the drawing of our Congressional districts and the fact that about a third of the state House and Senate races have only one

candidate running seem to be causing more folks to ask if there is a better way to establish district boundaries.

A Change for Adam Linker – The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has announced that Adam will join the Trust this month as a new Health Care Division Program Officer. In this position he will serve as the primary contact for grantees and potential grantees in the Eastern North Carolina region for the Trust’s Health Care Division. Adam has been the co-director of the North Carolina Justice Center’s Health Access Coalition. We wish Adam the best in his new position and hope that we can continue to work closely with him.

April Coalition on Aging Meeting – Mark your calendar. The Coalition meeting for the month of April will be held on Friday, April 22, 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). An agenda for the meeting will be available in mid-April.

Coalition on Aging Membership – Membership in the Coalition on Aging is open to any agency, organization, group, or individual who is interested in aging in North Carolina. Benefits of membership include:

- Opportunity to share and network with colleagues from around the state.
- Receive in-person updates on aging issues, and hear presentations on hot topics at regular membership meetings.
- Have a collective voice in advocating for and raising awareness about issues impacting older North Carolinians.
- Be included in the selection of annual legislative priority issues.
- Receive twice monthly updates, including legislative updates, on issues related to aging.
- Receive action alerts with talking points when contact is needed with your legislator, member of Congress, or other policy makers.
- Get discounts on registration for the Coalition's annual meeting.

To renew your membership or to sign up for the first time, go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx>. We hope you will choose to be part of the Coalition and join your colleagues from around the state in coming together to advocate for older North Carolinians.

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