



NYS ASSEMBLY

Committee on Aging

SHELDON SILVER, SPEAKER ❄️ JEFFREY DINOWITZ, CHAIR ❄️ WINTER 2010

Message from the Chair

Dear Friend,

I am pleased to present to you the work of the Assembly Committee on Aging from the 2010 legislative session. 2010 was a challenging year for all New Yorkers, and seniors were no exception. While difficult choices had to be made, the Aging Committee again stood up for the seniors of New York and demonstrated the Assembly's dedication to providing meaningful and beneficial services to our citizens.

As Chair of the Aging Committee, I am privileged to represent one of the largest populations in New York State. In doing so I hear a vast array of issues facing our seniors from Buffalo to Montauk. While these issues vary from place to place, most seniors simply desire the same thing: affordable prescription drug coverage, reliable transportation assistance, a warm meal a couple days of the week among friends, and above all else, to age with dignity and respect from their fellow New Yorkers.

It is my aim during the course of the coming session to ensure that these issues are represented at the negotiating table and to keep senior citizens a priority even when we are forced to make tough decisions. I look forward to serving you for another session and wish you and yours a happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chairman, Assembly Committee on Aging



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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2010 Aging Committee Budget Hearing: “Senior Centers, Funding, Challenges, and Value to the Community”

The Aging Committee recently held a public hearing regarding senior centers, specifically their funding, challenges, and value to the community. Senior centers provide meals, socialization, and many other services that make them invaluable to the communities they serve. Community-based services for seniors have been proven to delay institutionalization, save both the State and the service recipients money, and enrich the lives of recipients.



(Left to Right) Children and Families Committee Chair William Scarborough, Aging Committee Chair Jeffrey Dinowitz, and Assemblywoman Annette Robinson are shown at a hearing on funding for senior centers sponsored by the two committees.

Senior centers have traditionally relied on funding to provide meals. For many years that was their sole purpose. Now senior centers provide

much more. Senior centers provide someone who sees the seniors on a regular basis and who will notice if something is wrong, a place out of the seniors' homes to go and socialize with peers, and many other services that can range from health screenings to informative presentations.

The committee heard from the New York City Department for the Aging, other local area agencies on aging, senior centers, and providers of services regarding how senior centers can address their challenges. A common theme was that senior centers are vital to the community, but without assistance they will find it difficult to continue operating, especially in municipalities that have cut funding for their centers due to the difficult economic climate.

As was the case in 2010, the coming year will bring equally difficult challenges for our committee, but maintaining services to our seniors will remain a priority.



Budget

The 2010 legislative session proved to be a challenging one. Tough decisions had to be made and sacrifices were necessary. The Aging Committee fortunately was able to come through with minimal losses in funding and programs that we offer our seniors in New York State. Below are some of the highlights of the 2010-2011 FY Budget.

Congregate Services Initiative (CSI)

- » This program funds senior centers and other senior wellness programs such as congregate meals, activities, and trips.
- » The Executive's budget proposal would have eliminated this program.
- » The Assembly restored 100% of the funding.

Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC)

- » The governor's budget proposal would have eliminated the EPIC wrap that provides coverage when a prescribed drug is not covered by the senior's Medicare Part D plan.



Assemblyman Dinowitz led the successful fight for a full restoration to many programs benefiting senior citizens.

- » The Assembly feared that this would result in seniors having to pay the entire cost of the drug out-of-pocket or being unable to afford their prescription.
- » A compromise was reached to address cost concerns and protect seniors that was included in the final budget.
- » If Part D denies coverage and the doctor chooses to pursue an appeal rather than change the prescription, EPIC will cover up to a 90 day supply of the prescribed drug, which can be renewed until the appeal is concluded.
- » If the doctor cannot be reached immediately, EPIC will cover a 72 hour emergency supply, which can be renewed until the pharmacy reaches the physician.
- » If the appeal is unsuccessful, the drug will still be covered by the EPIC program.
- » This ensures that seniors will not be without medication at any time while their appeal is being resolved.

Patient's Rights Hotline and Advocacy Project

- » Among other activities, this program provides discharge planning to ensure continuity of care to seniors leaving hospitals and nursing homes.
- » The Executive's budget proposal would have eliminated this program.
- » The Assembly restored 100% of the funding.

Programs You May Qualify For

Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC)

EPIC is New York State's prescription plan for seniors aged 65 and older with an income of \$35,000 or less for single seniors, or \$50,000 or less for married seniors. It covers almost all prescription medicines, including insulin and insulin syringes, and works with Medicare Part D. For more information, the toll-free EPIC hotline is available at: (800) 332-3742.

This year in the budget, a few changes were made to the EPIC program. The program was expanded to include out-of-state pharmacies that register with the state, which gives seniors more options when choosing a pharmacy that meets their needs. In addition, the EPIC program will now enroll eligible seniors in low-income subsidies and savings programs for Medicare.

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program

This program is available to people aged 62 and over who are heads of the household and live in rent-controlled or rent-regulated apartments or Mitchell-Lama public housing. To be eligible, renters must also pay one-third or more of their income for rent. The income limit can be up to \$29,000, depending on where the senior lives. Contact the local government or the NYC Department of Finance at 311 to find out the limit in each locality.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)



New York State's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps pay heating costs. Eligibility is determined by annual income and household size. To find out more about HEAP, call the New York State Senior Citizen Office for the Aging hotline at (800) 342-9871 or the local office for the aging. In New York City, the NYC Department for the Aging can be reached at 311.

The State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) offer services to assist residents in making energy-efficient improvements to their homes to further reduce their energy costs. For more information, contact DHCR at 1-866-ASK-DHCR or NYSERDA at 1-866-NYSERDA.

Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)

If taking care of everyday chores is a problem, EISEP can help. The program helps people aged 60 and over who want to live at home but need help with everyday activities, such as dressing, bathing, shopping and cooking. The cost depends on the senior's income. Call the local office for the aging for more information.

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