



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Senate Passes Bills to Improve Quality of Life for Seniors

Darrel J. Aubertine

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Aubertine: Legislation Passed Provides Seniors Protections, Better Access to Care and Tax Relief

ALBANY (June 21, 2010)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine said today that a package of bills passed in the Senate last week will help Central New York and North Country seniors save money on a fixed income and provide protections against abuse, including a new “Gold Alert” system to help families locate missing seniors.

“Our seniors are a priority and this package of bills addresses several needs,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This legislation will open EPIC to more seniors who need it, expand absentee ballot options for seniors in nursing homes, establish new protections and even extend deadlines for tax exemptions. After a lifetime of hard work in our communities, seniors deserve fundamental protections and benefits that will keep them in New York where they lead healthy and active lives.”

Included in the legislative package is a bill to increase income eligibility levels in the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage prescription drug program from \$35,000 to \$50,000 for unmarried residents and from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for married residents. This will extend benefits to a greater number of seniors in need by updating these eligibility levels.

Legislation (S.2056b) in that package also builds on the previously established statewide Amber Alert system used by law enforcement to alert the public to missing children. This will allow information to reach police officers sooner aiding in locating vulnerable adults who have wandered away from their homes.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 60 percent of people with dementia will wander away from home at some point. Studies have shown that 50 percent of those who are not found within 24 hours are at serious risk for injury or death. Many health organizations across the state have expressed support, including the Coalition of Alzheimer's Associations of New York and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

In order to prepare local officers for "Gold Alerts," the new program will develop training for law enforcement that helps investigators identify and manage cognitively disabled adults. In addition it creates a toll-free 24-hour hotline that residents can use to report a missing loved one.

The Senate passed 12 bills last week to benefit seniors. The package includes legislation which provides for increased absentee voting options in nursing homes, authorizes the Office of Children and Family Services, in cooperation with the Office of the Aging, to track and report on the incidence of elder abuse, and extends the deadline for seniors to apply for property tax exemption.