



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Urges Postal Service's WNY District to Re-Launch Carrier Alert to Protect Local Seniors

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 17, 2013

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Carrier Alert provides a daily check-in and notification system to protect the health and well-being of local seniors and people with disabilities.

Kennedy calls Carrier Alert a low-cost option to ensure WNY seniors are kept safe.

Kennedy: Letter carriers visit every home and business in our nation six days a week, and there have been countless instances of letter carriers saving lives and serving as neighborhood guardians on their routes.

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, has urged the Western New York district of the U.S. Postal Service to re-launch an important, very low-cost program that aims to protect the health and well-being of local senior citizens and people with disabilities. It's called Carrier Alert, and it provides a daily check-in and notification system when letter carriers stop by the homes of individuals with limited mobility.

When an individual or their family requests the service, the letter carrier on that route will know to check in with the individual and ensure they are well. The problem is that the formal structure of the Carrier Alert program has not been fully implemented or properly maintained in the Western New York area. As a result, local seniors and people with disabilities do not have access to an important program that is available to people in many other parts of the country.

“Letter carriers visit every home and business in the nation six days a week, and there have been countless instances of letter carriers saving lives and serving as neighborhood guardians along their routes,” said Senator Kennedy. “The Carrier Alert program provides an important and low-cost opportunity to ensure local seniors and people with disabilities remain safe in their homes every day. Our local letter carriers are going to stop by every house anyway, so it's only common sense that we implement a program that will help protect the well-being of residents along the way.”

Larry Kania, president of the local branch of the National Association of Letter Carriers, said, “The Carrier Alert program is a common-sense tool that helps letter carriers make sure senior citizens on our routes are safe. We urge the USPS to join us in working to restart this program in Western New York. We thank Senator Kennedy for stepping up to protect the safety of senior citizens and people with disabilities, and we stand with him in calling for action on Carrier Alert.”

The National Association of Letter Carriers and the U.S. Postal Service jointly administer the program with the support of a local social service agency such as a non-profit organization or the local senior services office. In Western New York, NALC Branch 3 would partner with the WNY District of USPS and another local agency to operate the program.

NALC Branch 3 leaders are eager to restart the Carrier Alert program, and leaders of the letter carriers' union have been meeting with local non-profits and social service agencies to encourage them to participate. Senator Kennedy has contacted the WNY District Manager of the USPS to urge them to get engaged in this program.

Carrier Alert requires interested residents or their families to opt-in to the program. Once registered in the program, a letter carrier will put a Carrier Alert symbol in the individuals' mailbox to inform other carriers to be mindful of any indications of alarm – like a build-up of mail. If there appears to be distress, the carrier will take steps to check on the residents' well-being.

The carrier will notify his supervisor or the local social service agency that has partnered in the program. The agency will then attempt to contact the resident by phone. If the resident does not answer, the agency will reach out to emergency contacts listed on the resident's carrier alert registration. If the emergency contact cannot be reached, the local agency will send someone to check on the residents' health and well-being.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.

In the photo above, Senator Kennedy teams up with Branch 3 NALC letter carrier Melissa Cummings to collect food on Southern Parkway in Cheektowaga, as part of the Letter Carriers' annual food drive this past weekend.

Full text of Senator Kennedy's letter to WNY District of USPS:

Mr. John Phelan

Acting District Manager, WNY District

1200 William Street

Buffalo, NY 14240

Dear Mr. Phelan,

I write today to urge you to fully implement Carrier Alert, a joint program of the U.S. Postal Service and the National Association of Letter Carriers. This program provides a low-cost support system for many senior citizens who live in my district and throughout Western New York.

Through this program, our nation's letter carriers watch out for senior citizens, the infirm and people with disabilities on their mail routes. Because letter carriers visit every home and business in the country six days a week, there have been countless instances of letter carriers

saving lives and serving as neighborhood guardians on their routes. Additionally, letter carriers care about their customers and develop friendships throughout their careers.

The individuals who have requested this service urgently need someone to check in on them regularly and make sure they are well. Implementing and maintaining the formal structure of this program is vital. As residents move from one area to another, and as new letter carriers join the Postal Service, it is imperative that the Carrier Alert program is in place and that carriers are trained to utilize this program effectively.

The participation of a local sponsoring agency is crucial to the administration of the program. There are several opportunities for collaboration, including the United Way, American Red Cross and local senior citizens councils. I've also been informed of the potential interest of AARP in supporting the program.

Recently, former Branch 3 NALC President Robert McLennan joined my staff, and I would be pleased to assign him to work with your office and the current leadership of Branch 3 to get this program up and running. I would also like to offer the assistance of my office in getting information about the Carrier Alert program to the senior centers and block clubs in my district. The Carrier Alert program helps keep New Yorkers safe, and I am committed to doing whatever I can do assist our local letter carriers in this noble service.

I look forward to working with you to serve the citizens of WNY. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy

New York State Senate, 63rd District