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Senator Foley Secures Funding for Enhanced STAR Exemption



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
BRIAN X. FOLEY
3RD SENATE DISTRICT
FOLEY.NYSENATE.GOV
BFOLEY@NYSENATE.GOV

ALBANY OFFICE:
905 LOB
Albany, New York 12247
Tel: 518-455-2303
Fax: 518-426-6825

HAUPPAUGE OFFICE:
State Office Bldg, Suite 2A-1
Veterans' Memorial Highway
Hauppauge, NY 11788
Tel: 631-360-3356

CENTRAL ISLIP OFFICE:
Courthouse Corporate Center
320 Carleton Avenue, Suite 1700
Central Islip, NY 11722
631-231-0517

SENIOR NEWSLETTER

Enhanced STAR Protected

Through Senator Foley's advocacy, funding for the Enhanced STAR program will continue. The Enhanced STAR program for seniors automatically adjusts income limits based on the annual federal Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The current income limit is \$74,700, and it will continue to increase at the same rate as COLA. The STAR income eligibility limit will never decrease. Enhanced STAR is available to senior citizens age 65 and older who meet the income requirements. For qualifying seniors, Enhanced STAR exempts \$60,100 of the full value of their primary residence. For property owned by a husband and wife, or by siblings, only one of them must be at least 65 years of age to qualify. You must file an application with your local assessor. Seniors applying for the Enhanced STAR exemption must demonstrate that the combined income of all of the owners of the property,

and of any owner's spouse who resides on the premises, is no greater than the income standard for the applicable income tax year. There are two methods of applying:

Traditional Method: Submit a copy of your income tax return(s) for the appropriate income tax year to the assessor with your STAR application by the application deadline each year.

STAR Income Verification Program: Supply your Social Security Number(s) and authorize the State Department of Taxation and Finance to verify your income eligibility each year.

For more information, please contact your local tax assessor or visit www.orps.state.ny.us.



SENATOR FOLEY FIGHTS FOR SENIOR SHARED HOUSING PROGRAM

Senator Foley sponsored legislation in the senate which would create a Senior Shared Housing Program through the State Office for the Aging (SOFA). Residents 60 years of age or older would be eligible to place their name into a registry maintained by SOFA to indicate interest in sharing their living space or in seeking living quarters with another senior. If implemented, this program will assist New York's seniors in reducing housing costs and increasing companionship and security. SOFA will be authorized to impose a fee of not more than \$1 for placing a senior's name in the registry. The fee would be used for the implementation and maintenance of the registry.

EPIC

The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) Plan helps New York senior citizens pay for their prescriptions. Any resident 65 years of age or older who has little or no prescription drug coverage through a private insurer or Medicaid can qualify if their incomes are below the established limits. Depending upon annual income, seniors are enrolled in either the fee plan or the deductible plan:

CATEGORY	INCOME	PLAN
SINGLE	BELOW \$20,000	FEE PROGRAM
SINGLE	UP TO \$35,000	DEDUCTIBLE PLAN
MARRIED	BELOW \$26,000	FEE PROGRAM
MARRIED	UP TO \$50,000	DEDUCTIBLE PLAN

Co-payments for specific drugs are based on the list price of the prescriptions you need and range from \$3 to \$20. Applications are available at a variety of locations throughout the state, including pharmacies, doctors’ offices, senior centers and county Offices for the Aging. For more information, call EPIC’s Helpline at 1-800-332-3742 or click on the EPIC link at www.health.state.ny.us.

SENIORS AND PROPERTY TAXES

More and more seniors are finding it nearly impossible to remain in their homes due to rising property taxes. In addition to successfully passing the circuit breaker and a property tax cap, Senator Foley also introduced legislation that would allow a freeze to be placed on real property taxes assessed against persons 65 years of age or older who earn \$32,000 or less per year. In order to make an application, the senior must have held the title for the property for at least two years.

HELPING SENIORS INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Senator Foley sponsored legislation that allows Suffolk County residents over the age of 65 to qualify for a rebate of up to \$2,000 for the purchase of energy efficient building products. Under the pilot program, seniors would be eligible for a rebate for renovation, repair, refurbishing, refitting, upgrade or other improvements. Fixed incomes prevent many seniors from making energy upgrades that can protect them from extreme heat or cold caused by aging building products, which can be deadly for seniors.



HELPING SENIORS STAY IN THEIR HOMES

Senator Foley sponsored legislation that passed the Senate which would make it easier for seniors to remain in their homes for longer periods of time. The legislation creates an incentive for new construction and renovations to existing homes that adhere to what is known as universal design. Universal design in this case requires accessible entrances, both interior and exterior, an accessible bedroom (or room which may become a bedroom) on the ground or first floor, an accessible or adaptable kitchen and an accessible bathroom or adaptable powder room. The inclusion of these types of entrances and rooms makes it easier and more practical for seniors to be able to occupy only the first floor of their homes, if necessary. Not having to climb stairs to use a bedroom or bathroom will allow more seniors to live in their own homes for longer, providing them with greater independence.



AGE-INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES

Senator Foley sponsored legislation, which was recently signed into law, that encourages the creation of age-integrated communities. The bill creates model zoning and planning guidelines for municipalities to use in fostering areas of growth that allow young professionals, families and seniors to live side-by-side. Our seniors provide a wealth of knowledge and memories that are important for the preservation of our shared cultural and social history. These communities will help to foster inter-generational relationships that will allow our seniors to continue living independently, while allowing our young residents to benefit from the wisdom our seniors can share.