



MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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NYSARA Supports Legislation That Protects New Yorkers From Discriminatory Pricing in Grocery and Drug Stores

S.8616/A.9396 will ensure food affordability for families and protect jobs in grocery and drug stores. As grocery prices continue to rise, it is crucial that lawmakers take immediate action to protect customers and workers from the discriminatory and dangerous overreach of surveillance pricing and electronic shelf labeling (ESL). Since seniors are often on a fixed income this process inordinately impacts them.

Over the past 12 months grocery prices in New York are up 6% and 30% overall since 2020

Unless action is taken, ESLs and surveillance pricing will only continue to drive up the costs of groceries. The use of personal customer data to set prices based on a customer's need or ability to pay presents a distinct opportunity for companies to price gouge and discriminate. ESL is the tool that will allow stores to do this. For example, a person with a peanut allergy as ascertained by past shopping history would be charged maximum price for foods that address that peanut allergy.

ESL technology can incorporate vast amounts of personal data which can be used to set different prices for different people in real time. Using personal customer data compiled into a customer profile, as well as monitoring consumers actions in store, a store can use an AI system to calculate the maximum amount of money a customer is willing to pay, and reflect that number on the ESL when the customer is in the aisle. We all deserve to pay the same prices for the same goods and charging more based on algorithms and personal information will hurt everybody.

NYSARA urges policymakers to protect consumers from discriminatory pricing

and preserve grocery worker jobs by passing S.8616/A.9396

The Protecting Consumers and Jobs from Discriminatory Pricing Act does the following:

- Prohibits the use of ESLs and surveillance pricing based on personal or protected data.
- Requires the use of analog shelf pricing in any grocery and drug retail establishment larger than 10,000 square feet.
- Exempts specific sectors such as banking, finance, and insurance from the provisions of the bill.
- Grants the State Attorney General enforcement authority to take action against any business entity that violates the act.
- Grants civil remedies for any individual that brings a private right of action for violating the act.

NYSARA represents 670,000 senior residents in NYS. ESLs will lead to job loss in the grocery sector and an unpredictable environment for consumers. NY must pass **S.8616/A.9396** to protect customers and jobs.

Governor's Proposed NYS Budget Places Emphasis on Issues for New York Seniors

NYSARA has a favorable reaction to Gov. Kathy Hochul's proposed state budget on funding senior services and other initiatives that will benefit older New Yorkers. The Governor's agenda prioritizes and reinforces existing programs that support seniors aging in place and building stronger communities.

There are also beneficial new initiatives to address the cost of living and affordability in housing, health care and even auto insurance rates. NYSARA will have more details to share in the weeks ahead about a variety of these areas.

The area that NYSARA would like the Governor to address more robustly is the full funding of HER Master Plan for Aging (MPA) which includes large numbers of initiatives supporting seniors and addressing issues on which there are

services for seniors that they are unaware of. Considering that older Americans provided \$72 billion in state and local tax revenue in NYS (35-42%) of total revenue and that those over 60 are 23%+ of the states population seniors should always be a significant priority for NYS.

In the meantime, here is some initial analysis of the Governor's proposed budget from the Fiscal Policy Institute.

<https://fiscalpolicy.org/fpi-briefing-first-look-at-the-executive-budget-fy-2027>

AI Scams Impact Seniors

- AI-assisted scams dramatically increasing.
- \$4.8B in losses (2024, 43% increase)
- Social media platform features enable easy exploitation of victims' trust.
- Federal rollbacks of consumer protection agencies.

Big Tech's Role

- Despite written fraud policies, Meta makes \$16B per year off of fraud ads
- Meta serves users 15B scam ads per day.
- Common themes continually emerge
- Have an essential responsibility to slow and stop these scams.

Healthcare Scams

- Scammers use social media and AI to direct people to deceptive healthcare-related websites.
- AI allows for deepfakes, falsified medical records, etc.
- Medicare loses an estimated \$60 billion every year to fraud, errors, and abuse.

From Our Friends at LiveOn NY

Federal Updates

Federal Appropriations for Aging Services: House and Senate leadership are

close to passing the final pending FY26 funding bills, and are expected to sign them into law by or shortly after the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on Jan. 30. Current funding levels for aging services are as follows:

- Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP): \$395 million
- ACL Direct Care Workforce Center: \$2 million
- ACL Falls Prevention: \$7.5 million
- ACL Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME): \$8 million
- CDC Falls Prevention: \$3.1 million
- HUD Aging in Place Home Modification Program: \$30 million
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): \$4.045 billion
- AmeriCorps Seniors: \$236.9 million

The National Council on Aging is managing a digital letter campaign to thank Congress for supporting aging services. You can send a letter [here](#).

Cuts Threatened For Sanctuary Cities: The federal administration appears committed to moving forward with its promise to withhold funding from states with “sanctuary cities” starting February 1. Cabinet agencies have been directed to review funding going out to a group of Democratic-controlled states including New York. More in the [Washington Post](#) and [Spectrum News 1](#).

HHS Reverses Mental Health Clawback: The federal administration reinstated the \$2 billion in addiction and mental health services funding that it initially tried to terminate after getting aggressive pushback from a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers and providers. This funding cut would have abruptly terminated drug treatment services, homelessness support, and other mental health and substance abuse programs across the country. Congress is expected to consider a major appropriations package by the end of the month including funding for SAMHSA, although the final figure is still up in the air. More in the [New York Times](#).

SNAP Updates:

- **SNAP Work Requirements/Benefits Updates:** A reminder that in New York, the SNAP Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver will remain in effect until March 1, 2026. ABAWDs in all areas of New York except Saratoga must start meeting the ABAWD work rules beginning March

1, 2026. More about upcoming SNAP requirements and the program are available at [OTDA](#)'s website. See also NYC Human Resources Administration updates [here](#). See also [here](#) for NYC Food Policy Center's Resources Guide on SNAP Updates.

- **Take action to protect SNAP:** Continued advocacy is needed to highlight the importance of strengthening the SNAP program and advocating against cuts.
 - CPC: [“Protect, Invest, and Expand Food Security” State Legislative Package](#)
 - NYS Senate: [Bill S665 to "Establish a state SNAP minimum benefit program"](#)
 - FRAC: [Urge Congress to Repeal Harmful SNAP Cuts in the Next Appropriation Bill](#)
 - Hunger Solutions New York: See [here](#).

Institutional Homebuyers are Targeted: The federal administration has signed an executive order restricting large investors' ability to purchase homes with the stated aim of reducing housing costs. The order directs agencies to promote home sales to individual buyers and directs the Attorney General and Federal Trade Commission to look into enforcing antitrust laws against large institutional investors. The federal administration is also developing legislation to codify the order's goals. However, experts at both the American Enterprise Institute and the Urban Institute estimate that only 1-4% of all housing stock is owned by institutional investors. More in [TIME](#).

Department of Justice Admits DOGE Employees Unlawfully Accessed Americans' Social Security Data

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) late Friday night admitted to making multiple inaccuracies and misrepresentations to federal courts in a case brought in February 2025 by the Alliance, AFSCME, and AFT challenging the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) employees' access to Americans' personal Social Security data.

In its filing, DOJ [admitted](#) that DOGE team members had improperly shared sensitive, personal data held by the Social Security Administration (SSA), validating key claims made in the initial case.

In response to the revelations, Democracy Forward, which represents the Alliance, AFSCME, and AFT in this suit, went back to the District and Appeals courts. Read more [here](#).

"The unauthorized release of Americans' personal data represents a profound violation of public trust. Retirees, workers, and families depend on the Social Security Administration to protect their most confidential information," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans. "We have a right to know what happened to our information, who had access to it, and what it was used for."

Alliance Members Rally to Support Social Security Administration Field Office Workers

Last week, Alliance members joined the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) to demand that Congress fully staff and fund the Social Security Administration. Members participated in rallies throughout the country, including in [Milwaukee](#), [Dallas](#), Aurora, Colorado, and [Cincinnati](#).

"When they start closing offices, that hinders our senior citizens," said **Ross Winklbauer**, president of the Wisconsin Alliance. "They call into Social Security if they have a question or to file a claim, and they're sitting on the phone for hours because of short staffing and not getting their questions answered."

Dallas Alliance Chapter President **Kenneth Williams** pointed out that the Administration's focus on digital-only communication is going to leave a lot of older Americans out: "There's a lot of folks who don't have access to the internet. There are a lot of people who aren't comfortable using computers. You're not going to just replace all of these Social Security offices with online access. That's not going to work. That's going to leave a lot of people out."



Left: Alex Creese and Brenda Carsten with AFGE Local 4012, Carolyn Boller with Alliance for Retired Americans in front of the Social Security office in Aurora, Colorado; Right: Texas Alliance member Judy Bryant (front) stands with other Alliance members outside a Social Security Administration office in Dallas

[A new report found that](#) more than half of all Social Security frontline employees make less than the living wage in their communities with many holding second or third jobs to make ends meet. SSA's ability to manage its workload has degraded since the Administration cut 12 percent of the agency's workforce last year. [As a result, many beneficiaries have struggled to access their benefits.](#)

"Wednesday's events were a much needed call to action. Congress must fully staff and fund the Social Security Administration so older Americans can receive the benefits they've earned without jumping through hoops," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "We will continue to work with allies to support Social Security workers, stop Administration attacks on the SSA, and strengthen benefits."

It's Time to Register for Alliance National Membership Meeting this April



The Alliance invites you to attend our National Membership Meeting in April at the Sahara hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

[Click here to register for the meeting.](#)

Come celebrate the Alliance's 25th anniversary and chart our path forward as we fight for retirement security and older Americans!

The event will kick off with a late afternoon welcome reception on Monday, April 27, and concludes by 12 PM on Thursday, April 30. Attendees will elect the Alliance's officers, participate in special workshops, learn about emerging issues and what's at stake in the 2026 elections, and ways to grow our retiree activism. They will also attend a special "Senior Prom Ball and Dinner" celebrating the Alliance's anniversary.

The registration fee is \$150 and covers all meeting activities and most meals. The hotel rate is \$69 per night, plus tax, with no resort fee and free parking. Register [at this link.](#)

Hotel reservations must be made separately. To book your hotel room online, [visit this link](#) or call 888-696-2121. Be sure to use the code **ARA2626**. Please contact

Joni Jones at jjones@retiredamericans.org or 888-373-6497 with any questions.

You're Invited: Special Webinar to Stop the Scam and Protect Older Adults from Social Media and AI-Driven Fraud

Scams targeting older adults are rapidly evolving, fueled by social media platforms and increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence tools. From fake ads and impersonation messages to cloned voices and deceptive videos, scammers are exploiting trust and technology at unprecedented levels. Older adults are being disproportionately harmed, yet education, consumer protections, and accountability have not kept pace.

Join us **January 29 at 4 PM ET** for a webinar introducing the Alliance's **Stop the Scam Campaign**.

During the webinar participants will learn how social media and AI are being used to target and deceive older adults and why education and collective action can lead to stronger protections and safer online environments.

Register here: <https://www.mobilize.us/allianceforretiredamericans/event/883590/>

KFF Health News: These 3 Policy Moves Are Likely To Change Health Care for Older People **By Paula Span**

Month after month, Patricia Hunter and other members of the Nursing Home Reform Coalition logged onto video calls with congressional representatives, seeking support for a proposed federal rule setting minimum staff levels for nursing homes.

Finally, after decades of advocacy, the Biden administration in 2023 tackled the problem of perennial understaffing of long-term care facilities. Officials backed a Medicare regulation that would mandate at least 3.48 hours of care from nurses and aides per resident, per day, and would require a registered nurse on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The mandated hours were lower than supporters hoped for, said Hunter, who directs

Washington state's long-term care ombudsman program. But "I'm a pragmatic person, so I thought, this is a good start," she said. "It would be helpful, for enforcement, to have a federal law."

In 2024, when the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services adopted the standards, advocates celebrated. But industry lawsuits soon blocked most of the rule, with two federal district courts finding that Medicare had exceeded its regulatory authority.

And after the 2024 elections, Hunter said, "I was concerned about the changing of the guard." Her concerns proved well founded.