



MONDAY ALERT

New York State Alliance *for* Retired Americans

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**NYSARA Launches “Stop the Scam” to Better Inform Seniors About
Online Fraud and
Support Mounts for Addressing the Problem and Holding Tech
Companies Accountable**



NYSOFA Director Greg Olsen, ARA's Marissa Whitehouse and NYSARA President Barry Kaufmann



Senate Aging Committee Chair Cordelle Cleare

The NYS Alliance for Retired Americans were joined by key state policy makers and other supporters for a news conference at the Capitol in Albany on Wed. March 11 to announce a new campaign to "Stop the Scam" and help older New Yorkers better protect themselves against online scams and fraud and press for stronger measures to hold scammers and technology corporations that enable and profit from them accountable.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, in 2024 Americans lost \$4.8 billion to online scams, often powered by artificial intelligence and spread across social networks, such as Meta's Facebook and Instagram. For example, a Reuters investigation found that Meta projected that 10% of its 2024 revenue would come from ads for scams and banned goods and it estimated that its platforms show users 15 billion scam ads a day.

Older adults can protect themselves starting with 1) broader education about common scams and how to reduce online risk, 2) sharing true stories of their experiences, 3) supporting measures to ensure that all who have a hand in the fraudulent activity are held accountable for both their actions and inaction in the face of widespread evidence, 4) understanding what to do if you are a victim of a scam, and 5) understanding there are tools that currently exist to identify scams/fraud before they happen.

Thank you to NYS Senate Aging Committee Chair Cordell Cleare, NYS Office for Aging Director Greg Olsen, Association for Aging Director Becky Preve, Daniel Lyon from Lifespan, NYS Senior Action Council Executive Director Maria Alvarez and others for participating in the event.

[Here is the link to NYSARA's News Release](#)

[NYSARA Stop the Scam Event Video](#)

Momentum Builds on Measures to Protect Consumers Online

NYSARA's News Conference on "Stop the Scam" coincided with Legislation being introduced in the U.S. Senate and NYS Legislature to create common sense safeguards to help protect seniors and other consumers and hold Tech platforms accountable against complicity with fraudsters.

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand is leading the way in Washington to hold tech companies accountable for profiting from scam related activity online involving seniors: <https://nystateofpolitics.com/state-of-politics/new-york/politics/2026/03/12/gillibrand-bill-aims-to-protect-seniors-from-financial-predators>

Additionally, New York lawmakers are responding to the situation as well:

<https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/state-bill-looks-to-protect-social-media-companies-22062683.php>

NYSARA Endorses SAFE Platforms Act to Protect New Yorkers from Online Scams

Statement of Barry Kaufmann, President of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA) regarding the SAFE Platforms Act, introduced by State Senator Andrew Gounardes and State Assembly member Alex Bores.

“The New York State Alliance for Retired Americans strongly supports the SAFE Platforms Act and urges its swift passage.

“Anyone who spends time online can see that online scams are out of control and getting harder to detect. The Consumer Federation of America estimates that online scams cost New Yorkers \$6.5 billion a year. This is particularly alarming for older adults, who the Federal Trade Commission says are among the most frequently targeted victims.

“The FTC and the FBI cite social media platforms as the most common entry point for scammers. The SAFE Platforms Act addresses this directly by requiring social media platforms to take common sense steps to detect, prevent, and remove fraudulent content and advertising and to provide consumers with a clear way to report suspected frauds or scams.

“NYSARA has launched a ‘Stop the Scam’ public education campaign with partners across the state. We are doing our part to educate older New Yorkers about online scams and how they can protect themselves. But public education alone is not enough. We also need strong laws and common-sense regulations to hold platforms accountable for stopping fraudsters before they wipe out someone’s life savings.”

Long Island Chapter of NYSARA Vice President Joins NYS Attorney General

At Long Island Event on Scams

NYSARA Long Island chapter Vice President Joan Perini participated in a forum led by NYS Attorney General Letitia James addressing the need for more attention and consumer protection against online scams.

NYSARA is focused on keeping the momentum going toward Greater Awareness and meaningful reforms toward accountability and ethical business practices by those profiting from online activity.

[Television Coverage from the Elmont Event](#)

SSA Inspector General Report Exposes New Allegation of Illegal DOGE Data Usage

A whistleblower complaint filed in January claims that a former Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) employee had unfettered access to Social Security Administration (SSA) data, kept his work laptop and credentials after he stopped working at the agency, and stored sensitive information on a thumb drive in order to share it with his private employer, according to [a new report](#) from the Social Security Administration Inspector General's office.

The former DOGE software engineer allegedly told co-workers he had the highest level of access to the "Numident" and "Master Death File" databases, which contain SSA records for more than 500 million Americans. He also asked for help transferring the data from a thumb drive to his personal computer so he could sanitize it and use it at a private company he was slated to join. When one co-worker refused to help, he said he expected to receive a presidential pardon if authorities found him guilty of illegal behavior.

"Anyone involved in this incident must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. Congress and the Social Security Inspector General must move quickly to get the facts and ensure bad actors are punished," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

"Allegations that a 'DOGE bro' may have removed highly sensitive Social Security data

onto a thumb drive should set off alarm bells across the country,” [said](#) **Richard Fiesta**, Alliance Executive Director. “If these reports are accurate, it is a stunning, illegal data security breach. Americans deserve timely, honest answers about what happened, whose information may have been exposed, and what will be done to protect them going forward.”

Events in Albany and Elmont, New York Draw Attention to Online Scams Targeting Seniors and the Alliance’s Work to Fight Back

On Wednesday, the New York State Alliance (NYSARA) held a press conference at the state capitol to demand action from state legislators and announce a series of educational events to educate seniors and their loved ones about AI-powered social media scams. [Watch highlights from the press conference here.](#)

NYSARA President **Barry Kaufmann** introduced speakers and shared stories of members’ firsthand experience with scams. NYS Senate Aging Committee Chair and Senator **Cordell Cleare**, New York State Office of Aging (NYSOFA) and former NYSARA Executive Director **Greg Olsen**, Executive Director of the NYS Association on Aging **Rebecca Preve**, **Dan Lyon** from Lifespan of Rochester, and Alliance consultant **Marissa Whitehouse** all spoke at the event.

“As chair of the Aging Committee in the Senate, I have long carried bills to create an elder justice task force and to freeze funds with regards to suspicious financial transactions. The time for these bills to become law is now backed by increased funding to trusted community partners to focus on prevention,” said Senator **Cleare**.



“It is heartless, offensive, cowardly, and unconscionable that people would take advantage of older New Yorkers through scams, including those facilitated by technology. Our elders took care of us, and now it's our duty to take care of them.”

New York State Attorney General **Letitia James** participated in a listening session sponsored by the Alliance, NYSARA, and other organizations on Thursday. Four seniors who were victims of social media scams shared their stories, and **Joan Perlini**, VP of the Long Island NYSARA chapter, asked **James** why victims are left with no recourse when the scam occurs online versus other platforms like banks. The attorney general noted that federal law only regulates banking scams and encouraged New Yorkers to contact her office if they are victims of a scam. [You can watch the livestream of the event here.](#)

“Senior fraud is not new, but artificial intelligence and social media have supercharged online scams into a multibillion dollar industry,” said President **Roach**. “That’s why we’re proud to launch our ‘Stop the Scam’ campaign in New York and across the country.”

Alliance’s National Membership Meeting is in April – Book Your Hotel Room Now

The Alliance invites you to attend our National Membership Meeting from April 27 to April 30 at the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. **Rooms at the hotel are filling up quickly, so please make reservations as soon as possible.**



[Click here to read the convention call and to register for the meeting.](#)

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 develop ways to grow our retiree activism. AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Fred Redmond**, former SSA Commissioner **Martin O'Malley**, pollster **Jason McGrath**, and President and CEO of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) [Hardy Merriman](#) are all slated to speak.

There will also be a special "Senior Prom Ball and Dinner" celebrating the Alliance's 25th anniversary. Registered attendees can bring outside guests to this event for a fee of \$50 per person.

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

New Report Reveals the True Cost of Online Consumer Scams



On Wednesday, the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) released "[The Scam Economy](#)," a report examining the prevalence of online consumer scams in the United States. The numbers are staggering: The report estimates that Americans lose an average of \$119 billion to online scams each year, more than seven times higher than previously estimated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Meta platforms are fertile ground for these scams, 57 percent of which take place on Facebook alone.

[Older Americans are especially vulnerable to online scams](#), particularly on social media. [The report](#) also finds that seniors, while more susceptible to scams, are less likely to report them to authorities, meaning that the true scale is unknown. However, data does show that seniors are losing significantly more money to scams each year, doubling in one year alone between 2021 and 2022.

"This report shows just how out of control these scams are," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Education alone cannot solve a problem that is operating on an industrial level. We need legislators and regulators to create more powerful safeguards and demand greater accountability from the technology platforms

that allow scams to spread.”

KFF Health News: Medicare Advantage ‘Dark Money’ Group Attempts To Win Higher Payments for Insurance Companies
By Fred Schulte and Maia Rosenfeld and David Hilzenrath

Judging by more than 16,400 comments recently posted on a federal government website, you’d think there was a groundswell of older Americans demanding that federal officials hike payments to their Medicare Advantage health insurance plans.

Yet about 82% of the comments are identical to a letter that appeared on the website of a secretive advocacy group called Medicare Advantage Majority, a data analysis by KFF Health News has found.

The “dark money” group does not reveal its funders or much else — other than to say it is “dedicated to protecting and strengthening Medicare Advantage” and is “powered by hundreds of thousands of local advocates nationwide.”

