



For Release: Immediate, April 11, 2024
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Senator Borrello Introduces Bill to Require Grocery Stores to Automatically Apply Digital Coupons for Senior Citizens and Loyalty Rewards Members

Senior citizens and loyalty program members without smartphones can't access digital-only coupons

ALBANY – Senator George Borrello has introduced [legislation](#) that would ensure that digital-only coupons and deals are automatically applied to the eligible grocery store purchases of senior citizens and loyalty program members who don't have the smartphones or devices needed to activate the discounts.

Senator Borrello explained that as paper coupons for grocery stores and food manufacturers have gradually disappeared, they have been replaced with digital alternatives that typically require online activation on a smartphone.

“Inflation is hurting the budgets of people across the spectrum, particularly those on fixed incomes. In the past, senior citizens could count on being able to reduce their grocery bills by using coupons from the newspaper or by taking advantage of weekly sales on produce, meat and dairy products,” said Sen. Borrello. “They could also obtain discounts by presenting physical loyalty or rewards program cards.”

“However, those days are gone. Today, most grocery store coupons and weekly specials are advertised online only and require digital activation to redeem. Loyalty cards are increasingly being replaced with smartphone apps. For seniors who don't use smartphones, this means they are unfairly deprived of discounts that could help ease the burden of higher grocery costs,” said Sen. Borrello.

The legislation states that any grocery store that offers digital coupons must automatically apply the coupons for eligible purchases at the point of sale for senior citizens. The stores would also be required to automatically apply eligible discounts for loyalty or rewards program members.

“[Data](#) indicates that 39 percent of older adults don't have a smartphone and 36 percent lack an internet connection in their homes. That is a significant chunk of the senior population that is being excluded from discounts that could help them make ends meet in this inflationary environment,” said Sen. Borrello.

Senator Borrello noted that according to the U.S.D.A., food prices have risen 25 percent over the past four years. These increases have hurt lower and middle-income seniors on fixed incomes particularly hard, causing some to cut back on food purchases, substitute fresh food for less healthy options, visit food banks or make cuts elsewhere in their budgets.

“Everyone has felt the effects of spiraling inflation but for low and middle-income retirees on fixed incomes, the impact is especially difficult,” said Senator Borrello. “The proposal I am advancing is one way that we can help ensure all seniors have access to discounts on food as well as streamlining the shopping experience. Retailers would benefit from higher customer satisfaction, boosting sales and consumer loyalty over the long-term.”

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