



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Senate Passes Valesky Legislation Creating “Gold Alert” System to Locate Missing Vulnerable Adults

DAVID J. VALESKY June 16, 2010

| ISSUE: **AGING, SENIORS**

Syracuse, N.Y.— Legislation sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) that will create a “Gold Alert” adult alert system for vulnerable and elderly New Yorkers passed the State Senate today.

“Too many lives have been lost as a result of adults with cognitive impairment wandering from home,” Senator Valesky said. “The Gold Alert puts their safety, and the peace of mind of their families, at the forefront.”

The legislation (S.2056b) would build upon the previously established statewide Amber Alert system used by law enforcement to alert the public to missing children. This will allow information to reach police officers sooner aiding in locating vulnerable adults who have wandered away from their homes.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, more than 60 percent of people with dementia will wander away from home at some point. Studies have shown that 50 percent of those who are not found within 24 hours are at serious risk for injury or death.

In order to prepare local officers for “Gold Alerts,” the new program will develop training for law enforcement that helps investigators identify and manage cognitively disabled adults. In addition it creates a toll-free 24-hour hotline that residents can use to report a missing loved one.

Several cases of vulnerable adults wandering away from their homes in Central New York prompted the legislation, including an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimer’s disease who left her Syracuse home and was later found at her previous residence in Connecticut.

Many health organizations across the state have supported the Gold Alert system, including the Coalition of Alzheimer’s Associations of New York and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

“The Coalition and its seven member chapters, thank the New York Senate for taking this important step in protecting its residents,” said Mary Ann Malack-Ragona, Coalition President and Executive Director of the Alzheimer’s Association. “As the leading advocacy and support organization for Alzheimer’s disease, the Alzheimer’s Association and this Coalition have actively pursued this legislation. Today, we are one step closer to providing greater piece of mind to the more than 320,000 New York families touched by this disease.”

“The proposed adult alert system outlined in Senator Valesky’s bill could have life-saving ramifications for vulnerable adults who can’t find their way home due to a medical condition,” Lois Aronstein, AARP New York State Director, said “Family members will also rest easier knowing that their community has a system in place to protect relatives with Alzheimer’s or other mental impairments.”

The same bill (A5520b), sponsored by Assemblyman William Magnarelli (D-Syracuse) was previously passed by the Assembly. If signed into law, New York would join several other states, including Illinois, West Virginia, North Carolina and Texas, in taking steps to assist

families of vulnerable adults with locating their missing loved ones