



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

## 6/17/2010: Seniors First

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY June 16, 2010

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### **SENIORS FIRST: SENATOR HUNTLEY ANNOUNCES LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SENIORS**

#### **Sweeping Legislation Provides Better Access, Better Care**

(D-Jamaica) Senator Shirley L. Huntley has announced that The New York State Senate passed a comprehensive package of legislation expanding services and increasing access for senior citizens. After a lifetime of hard work and providing for their families, senior citizens deserve fundamental protections and services in order to continue to lead healthy and active lives. As New York's population ages, this becomes increasingly important. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2008 an estimated 13.4 percent of New York's population consisted of individuals age 65 or older.

"This comprehensive package of legislation lays the foundation for improved access to information and services for our senior citizen community," said Senator Huntley. "As the baby boomer generation ages, New York's senior citizen population will continue to grow.

It is incumbent upon us to provide the essential care and support seniors rely on to maintain healthy and independent lives.”

As people continue to age, they become more susceptible to brain disorders or diseases that can leave a person cognitively impaired. For example, Alzheimer’s disease is a brain disorder that predominantly affects people 65 years of age or older. This disease often leaves people with significant memory loss, which often times, causes people to go missing. The missing vulnerable adult alert system for New York State was created to address this problem and to offer help to the missing persons and their families. This system will disperse information about the missing person without revealing that person is considered vulnerable.

Another aid to seniors arrives in the form of the historic expansion of EPIC eligibility. This will ease the financial burden for tens of thousands of seniors across New York who rely on costly prescription drugs. As drug costs have risen, they have become the largest single source of out of pocket healthcare costs for seniors.

More recently, there have been many reports of abuse against the elderly in nursing homes and various other living facilities for the elderly. To understand where, when, and how this abuse occurs, the legislature has authorized the Office of Children and Family Services, in cooperation with the Office of the Aging, to track and report on the incidence of elder abuse. The data collected will serve as a steppingstone to eliminating the problem and for establishing stricter laws to prevent our most vulnerable citizens from abuse.

This package also grants money to the senior citizens to purchase an air-conditioner or to pay for their electric bill in the summer. According to ABC news, senior citizens are at high risk for heat strokes due to the thinning of their skin and certain medications, which often makes them desensitized to heat. Therefore, in order to protect our senior citizens, this crucial piece of legislation was passed to ensure that they have access to a source of cool air

during the scorching summertime.

Another aspect of this package extends the deadline for seniors to apply for property tax exemption by within 60 days from the deadline. This extended deadline only applies to those seniors who have received the property tax exemption in the previous year. Seniors will also receive a filing application along with a friendly reminder notice 30 days before the deadline. This will help ensure that every senior citizen, if eligible, is granted their exemption by announcing the deadline and by extending it if needed.

This comprehensive package of legislation is part of the Democratic Majority's commitment to providing for and protecting our senior citizen community. More reforms and services benefiting senior citizens have been passed since the Democrats took the majority than in the last several decades combined and they will only continue to strive for the best for the senior citizens.