



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian X. Foley

## Senator Foley Makes It Easier for Seniors to Stay Home

BRIAN X. FOLEY June 17, 2010

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Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point) sponsored legislation (S6819), which passed the senate last week, that will make it easier for senior citizens to remain in their own homes.

The legislation recognizes the importance of accessible housing to the safety and welfare of certain portions of our populations by creating an incentive for new home construction and renovations for existing homes that meet universal design standards. The incentive is in the form of permit fee reductions. In order for a new home or home renovation to meet the standards of universal design it must include accessible entrances both externally and internally, an accessible bedroom or room that can be converted to a bedroom on the ground or first floor, an accessible or adaptable kitchen, and an accessible bathroom or adaptable powder room.

“Ensuring that more of our homes are built or renovated to be accessible to our senior citizens will help more of them to age in their own homes and eliminate the need in many cases to move to assisted living or nursing facilities,” said Senator Foley. “Remaining in their own homes will help more of our seniors to retain their dignity and independence as they age. Reducing the number of seniors who reside in assisted living or nursing facilities will also help to reduce the cost to the state of paying for these individuals to live in the

facilities.”

“AARP surveys show that nearly 90% of the 50+ population want to stay in their homes and communities as they age, where they have strong social networks and a sense of familiarity,” said Lois Aronstein, AARP New York State Director. “Senator Foley’s legislation will make our communities more livable for people of all ages and abilities.”

“Vision Long Island supports the Universal Design legislation that will guide future development to build in a way that supports the needs of an aging population,” said Eric Alexander, Executive Director of Vision Long Island. “The 30-member LI Lobby Day Coalition, of which Vision Long Island is a member, prioritized this bill as critical to addressing the future needs of Long Island’s senior population in a cost-effective manner.”

The legislation also allows setback requirements to be waived if the waiver is necessary for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and it is determined that there is no other practical way to achieve compliance. It also ensures that no exemptions or waivers will be granted if the building is required to be accessible under other State or Federal laws or if the building is greater than 2,400 square feet.

The companion bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Alessi, is currently in the Assembly Governmental Operations Committee. If signed into law, this legislation would take effect on January 1, 2011.