



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

SENIORS FIRST: Senator Johnson Announces Passage of Package to Improve the Quality of Life for Seniors

CRAIG M. JOHNSON June 27, 2010

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Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau), announced the passage of a comprehensive legislative package that will expand and increase access to services for seniors on Long Island and across New York state.

Included in this legislative package are bills to make thousands of seniors eligible for the EPIC program who were not previously, establish new safety procedures for seniors who disappear from care and a measure sponsored by Senator Johnson that would expand the deadline for seniors to apply for property tax exemptions.

“After a lifetime of hard work and providing for their families, our seniors deserve fundamental protections and services in order to continue to lead healthy and active lives,” Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau) said. “My legislation would expand the opportunity for seniors to get the tax relief for which they are entitled. While more needs to be done, this package will help more seniors stay in their homes and in their communities.”

The plan includes:

- **(S1839)** Increasing eligibility levels for the EPIC program. The historic expansion of EPIC eligibility 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.

- **(S949)** Senator Johnson's legislation that would expand the deadline for seniors to apply for property tax exemptions. The bill additionally directs the relevant municipality to send out a second copy of the notice of exemption 30 days prior to the filing deadline.

- **(S5376-A)** Create a missing vulnerable adult alert system (the Gold Alert) for New York State.

- **(S5376-A)** Authorizes 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.

This 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.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 13.4 percent of New York's population consisted of individuals age 65 or older.

Dennis Bozzi, President/CEO of the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (NYAHSA) said, "As the baby boomers begin entering their senior years it is more important than ever that the state begin developing the infrastructure that will allow people to "age in place" and remain independent as long as possible. NYAHSA applauds the State Senate for advancing this package of bills that will expand access to important programs like the NORC and provide consumer protections and financial support to seniors that will allow them to remain in the community as long as possible, delaying or eliminating their need to utilize institutional care."

Mary Ann Malack-Ragona, Coalition President and Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association said, "The Coalition and its seven member chapters, thank the New York Senate for passing the Gold Alert legislation and taking this important step in protecting its residents. 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."

Justin Cunningham, Executive Director for the Statewide Senior Action Council said, "The Members of New York Statewide Senior Action Council applaud the State Senate for moving forward on this comprehensive package of Pro-Senior bills. Each individual bill in its own way seeks to protect and maintain the health, safety and economic security

of New York's growing senior and elder population."

Laura Cameron, Executive Director, NYS Association of Area Agencies on Aging said, "These bills lay a foundation of improved access to information and services for senior citizens and the increasing number of baby boomers reaching age 60. Census 2010 projects the age 60+ population at 3.65 million, or 18.7% of New York State's population. This comprehensive package of bills is critically important to seniors because they would expand access to programs and services that enable them to live independently with dignity in their homes and communities."