



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

## Elder Abuse Coalition Partners, Senator Valesky Join to Fight Elder Financial Abuse

DAVID J. VALESKY June 6, 2014

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SYRACUSE, N.Y.—Today, a coalition of advocates from the Syracuse Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Coalition's Elder Abuse & Justice Committees joined State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) to draw attention to the serious issue of elder financial abuse and to invite the community to a special presentation, “Physical & Financial Fitness,” in recognition of the 9th Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Senator Valesky, Chairman of the Senate Aging Committee, recently released a report showing financial abuse among New York's seniors to be more prevalent than initially thought, with much higher rates of undocumented incidents that actually exist. In order to combat these rising trends and to protect even more elderly individuals from becoming future victims themselves, Senator Valesky and his colleagues in the Senate introduced a package of eight bills that will prevent deceptive financial transactions from taking place, update collection of data methods to track abuse statewide and amend existing law to stiffen penalties to deter criminal acts from occurring in the first place.

To help local seniors learn about the issue of elder abuse, the "Physical & Financial Fitness" presentation will be held Wednesday, June 11 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the Syracuse Moose Lodge, 1121 Milton Ave., Syracuse. Featured topics include a community overview of elder abuse, powers of attorney, avoiding scams and estate planning. The formal presentation will be preceded by a continental breakfast at 9 a.m. Several organizations including Upstate Medical University, Vera House and the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office will host resource tables. No registration is necessary for this free event.

Senator Valesky praised the committees' collaborative work in highlighting this growing problem. "The prevalence of elder abuse in all forms, especially financial, is increasing as our senior population grows. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that older New Yorkers are protected, and the best way to do this is by joining together to increase awareness and put laws on the books give law enforcement the tools they need to prosecute offenders."

Through the work of the Coalition's Elder Abuse Committee, Onondaga County was one of nine communities nationwide to receive a highly competitive three-year Abuse in Later Life Grant from the Office on Violence Against Women to identify, prevent and eliminate elder abuse, neglect and exploitation and to foster community awareness through collaboration, education, intervention and advocacy. Committee membership is diverse with individuals

from healthcare, Adult Protective Services, Onondaga County Dept of Aging and Youth, mental health providers, home care institutions and other local human service providers who serve the elderly population.

John Balloni, Civil & Administrative Chief, Onondaga County Sheriff's Office, said: "Issues of elder abuse and exploitation are vastly under reported to law enforcement and, very much like the issue of domestic violence 30 years ago, it is a problem that hasn't been addressed adequately. We need to address this problem in a manner consistent with the way we dealt with domestic violence, by shining a light on the issue, changing attitudes and laws to more effectively help our growing population of seniors."

Barry Beck, Deputy Commissioner, Onondaga County Department of Adult and Long Term Care Services, said: "Collaboration around the issue of elder abuse is critical and we appreciate the efforts of our community partners to tackle the tough issue of abuse and exploitation of older adults. Similarly, the purpose of the Onondaga County Human Service Departments reorganization is to assist adults, children and families to be successful in the home, school and community. For the aging population, it means having Aging, Adult Protective, Adult Mental Health and Veterans services available in a single department, so that seniors can be more effectively served."

Michael Kasmarek, Onondaga County District Attorney's Office – Economic Fraud & Rackets Bureau, said: "The District Attorney's Office is focused on prosecuting all crimes and serving justice in every case; this is particularly true in cases that involve vulnerable victims. Any opportunity we have to more effectively address crimes that are perpetrated against our elderly population is a positive step. We look forward to using this legislation to further serve the interests of justice."

Jenny Hicks, Project Coordinator – Abuse in Later Life Grant, Vera House, said: "We are appreciative of all the organizations we collaborate with under this grant – Onondaga

County Department of Adult & Long-Term Care Services, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office and the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office. We are also grateful for the work Senator Valesky is doing to advance legislation to protect vulnerable adults. There is no excuse for abuse at any age, and older adults in our community deserve to live with dignity and freedom from abuse, neglect and exploitation."