

AARP Advocacy Agenda *Across the States*

2015

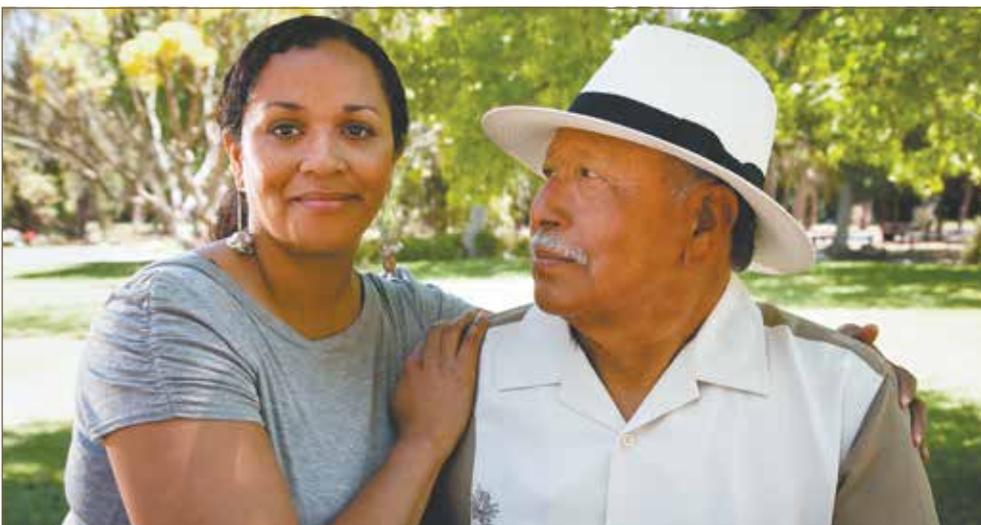
INTRODUCTION

AARP is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all as we age so that people live with dignity and purpose and fulfill their goals and dreams. One of the ways AARP pursues its mission is through advocacy led by our state offices located in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This agenda provides an overview of the key advocacy issues AARP will be advancing in states across the country in 2015.

SUPPORTING FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Today, more than 42 million family caregivers provide unpaid care valued at about \$450 billion a year, helping their older loved ones stay at home and out of costly institutional care, often paid for by Medicaid. In fact, this amount is more than the cost of the entire Medicaid program. Simple, yet profound changes can be made to support family caregivers so they can safely care for their loved ones at home, keep them out of nursing homes, and prevent unnecessary hospitalizations. That's why AARP has embarked on a multi-state effort to advance commonsense legislative solutions to provide some basic support for family caregivers that will make big responsibilities a little bit easier.

Family caregivers play a critical role in care transitions, especially as their loved ones move from hospitals to rehabilitation centers and back home. Today, nearly 50 percent of family caregivers perform medical/nursing tasks, often with little or no explanation or guidance. That's why AARP will continue to work with state lawmakers to enact the Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act that will ensure hospitals and care facilities formally acknowledge a patient's family caregiver at the time of admission;



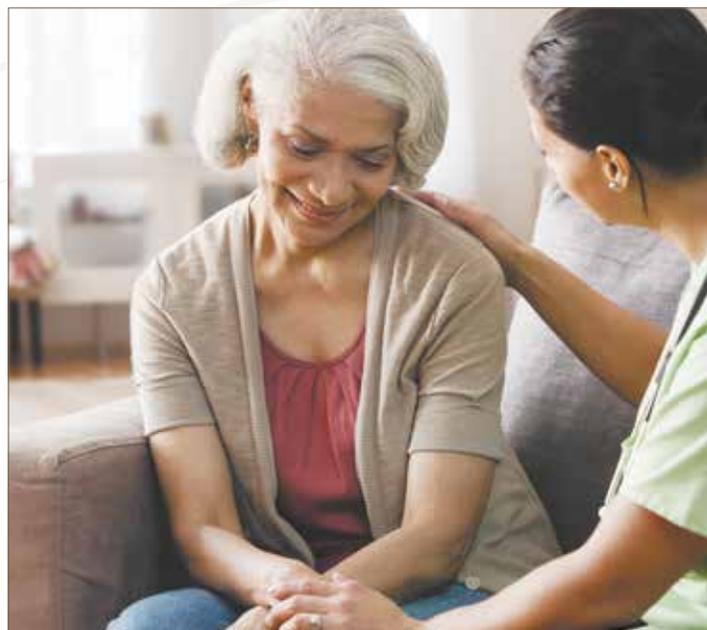
AARP[®]
Real Possibilities

AARP Advocacy Agenda *Across the States*

notify the family caregiver at the time of discharge or transition; and provide them with a live demonstration of the medical/nursing tasks they will need to perform at home.

Additionally, AARP will continue to call on state leaders to help family caregivers support their older loved ones by enacting law and program changes that would:

- » Expand nurses' authority to heal by removing the red tape that prevents Advanced Practice Registered Nurses from using the fullest extent of their education and training, and by increasing the number of tasks that can be delegated to home care workers;
- » Advance adult guardianship and power of attorney reforms to help family caregivers provide for their loved ones, regardless of where they live;
- » Increase the availability of respite care so that family caregivers have the opportunity to take much-needed and hard-earned breaks;



- » Reduce the financial burden of family caregivers through tax credits;
- » Provide workplace flexibility and protections like paid and unpaid sick leave so that family caregivers are not asked to choose between keeping their job or caring for their loved one;
- » Create a public registry of qualified home care workers so family caregivers can find reliable care for their loved ones; and
- » Improve access to care through tele-health and allow qualified providers to practice in multiple states.

HELPING PEOPLE LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR OWN HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

Surveys show the vast majority of individuals want to stay in their homes for as long as possible as they age. That's why AARP believes no one should be forced into costly institutions when they can receive care in their homes. In fact, providing care to an older person at home is one-third of the cost of nursing home care. AARP is calling on state lawmakers to accelerate the pace of change and take actions to transform the system of care so that older individuals can receive services in their homes and communities and live independently at home. To accomplish this, AARP will advocate for:

- » Increasing the number of older people who receive home- and community-based services;
- » Increasing consumer-directed care, home health, and personal care services;
- » Addressing racial disparities in who receives home care services and supports; and
- » Improving the quality of critical care transitions from hospital to rehabilitation to home.

ENHANCING RETIREMENT SECURITY

Today, 55 million Americans don't have access to a retirement savings plan at work. That's over 50 percent of the 18- to 64-year-old population. And, because Social Security alone isn't enough to depend on, AARP is advocating for commonsense state solutions that would enable more workers to save for retirement. "Work and Save" makes it easier to grow the additional savings workers will need to live a secure and independent future. Work and Save also helps small businesses who want to offer retirement savings options to their employees, but can't afford the cost of doing so. More than 17 states have studied a variety of options to provide employers and their employees with low-cost savings options. In 2014, Illinois became the first state to enact workplace savings legislation.

In addition, AARP is fighting to protect retirees from cuts to the benefits and cost of living adjustments they were promised, and to preserve defined benefit plans. AARP supports efforts to shore up underfunded pension systems, and reminds legislators that changes must be fiscally responsible, ensure the long-term viability of existing defined-benefit plans, and protect the financial security of workers and retirees. AARP is especially attentive to workers who have contributed to a pension plan for a significant time or who are in or close to retirement. These individuals have little opportunity or time to make different retirement savings choices and should not be penalized by benefit cuts.

FIGHTING FOR CONSUMERS

Utility bills are becoming a larger portion of the household budget for those 50 and older. That's why AARP is fighting for reasonable utility rates, and safe and reliable services.

AARP will continue its utilities advocacy efforts with



an emphasis on:

- » Defeating or mitigating unreasonable rate increases and rate structures for utility customers;
- » Advocating for the establishment of and funding for independent state utility consumer advocate offices to represent residential consumers;
- » Opposing legislation that would deregulate telephone or retail electric and gas service without adequate consumer protections; and
- » Ensuring the preservation of key consumer protections during market transitions.

To help safeguard older Americans from financial abuse, AARP is focusing on:

- » Enacting laws that help prevent, detect, report and assign penalties against elder financial exploitation;
- » Enacting laws that preserve funding for adult protective services; and

AARP Advocacy Agenda *Across the States*

- » Encouraging the creation and participation in multidisciplinary networks for those responsible for reporting elder abuse to address specific systematic issues, remove barriers, and share information.

ACCESSING AFFORDABLE HEALTH COVERAGE

AARP supports measures to help consumers access affordable and quality health coverage. That's why AARP encourages states to exercise the option to expand Medicaid coverage to individuals who earn up to \$16,000. Though more than half of the states have extended such coverage, millions of Americans are still without health coverage, including those age 50-64. AARP supports flexibility and innovation in the way a state seeks to expand health care coverage for these individuals, providing that cost sharing and other requirements are fair and reasonable.

DESIGNING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES

In order to meet the demands and to tackle the future challenges of our aging society, we know that we will need to make adjustments to services and infrastructure. In short, we need to make communities more "livable" for all ages. All benefit from barrier-free buildings and streets as well as from more convenient access to services, local businesses, and green spaces. AARP's advocacy includes efforts to adopt "Safe Streets" legislation at the state and local levels, as well as effective transportation planning, coordination, and funding to address the needs of all residents, especially those living in rural communities. In addition, the adoption of housing design standards in line with AARP's model legislation can make housing more accessible, easier to use, and more livable for persons of all ages and physical abilities.



AARP | 601 E Street, NW | Washington, DC 20049

www.aarp.org/states | sasi@aarp.org



@AARPAvocates



@AARPAvocates