

## **North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature 2011 Legislative Priorities**

**Provide Funding to Sustain and Expand Project C.A.R.E.:** Hailed as innovative and cost effective, Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) was designed and tested in North Carolina. It has become a national best practice model for providing respite services to family members who are caring at home for a relative with Alzheimer's Disease or related dementia. The number of North Carolinians afflicted with these dementias, now around 170,000, will continue to rise. When families are helped to keep loved ones at home longer, less time may be required for any institutional care. Resulting savings in public funds are substantial. We recommend that \$1,500,000 in recurring funds be appropriated for each year of the biennium to sustain Project C.A.R.E. in the 23 counties it now serves and to expand it into other counties.

**Increase funding for home and community based services for older adults by five million dollars in recurring funding.** Home and community based services include home-delivered meals, adult day care, in-home aid and other services that help impaired older adults stay in their homes. These services are less costly than institutional care. The rapidly growing population of older adults is increasing the demand for these services. There are thousands of people on the waiting list for Home and Community Care Block Grant services.

**Increase funding for senior centers by an additional \$2,000,000 in recurring funds for a total of \$3,265,316 a year.** Senior centers provide programs and services that enhance the health and wellness of older adults and support their efforts to remain independent. The 162 senior centers currently in operation or under development serve 97 counties. The requested increase in recurring funds would enable those senior centers to expand their services to meet the needs of a growing population of older adults.

**Mandate pre-employment and random drug testing for employees of nursing and assisted living facilities.** All nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and adult care homes provide specialized care for frail adults with chronic health programs. The safety of residents is compromised when employees abuse drugs. Residents are at a higher risk of receiving poor care and being victims of theft and abuse when their caretakers are abusing drugs. It is also an increased liability to the facility and its staff. While some long-term care facilities already require pre-employment and random drug testing for their employees, all long-term care facilities should have this policy in place.

**Dental Care for North Carolina's Adult Special Care Population.** North Carolina has no statewide oral health system to provide for frail elderly and intellectually/developmentally disabled who need special care. Existing mobile dentistry units have demonstrated their effectiveness in improving dental health of the long term care population. We urge the General Assembly to: 1) maintain current adult Medicaid dental benefits; 2) provide equitable reimbursement to Medicaid dental providers; 3) add four additional mobile dentistry units over the next four years; 4) expand dental school special care curricula; and 5) provide continuing education courses on special care dentistry for health care professionals.

The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature was created by the North Carolina General Assembly with the passage of Senate Bill 479 in July of 1993.

The Senior Tar Heel Legislature was created to:

- Provide information to senior citizens on the legislative process and matters being considered by the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Promote citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Assess the legislative needs of older citizens by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly.

Each of the 100 North Carolina counties is entitled to one delegate to the Senior Tar Heel Legislature. Most counties also have an alternate delegate. Delegates and alternates must be age 60 or older. The North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services provides staff support for the Senior Tar Heel Legislature in cooperation with the 17 Area Agencies on Aging, which are responsible for conducting the selection of delegates and alternates.

Mary Edwards of the Division of Aging and Adult Services is the principal staff aide.

**For more information about the North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature, please contact your county's Delegate or Alternate or the following members:**

**Speaker**

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**Speaker Pro Tempore**

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Carteret County  
108 Buena Vista Drive  
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**Deputy Speaker Pro Tempore**

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Onslow County  
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