

Sixty Seconds

An Informational Update from Senior Resources of West Michigan

February, 2008

WHAT WE DO *makes a difference*

Gearing Up for Senior Advocacy

Are issues related to mature adults important to you? Things such as transportation, Medicare, Social Security, the desire to choose where you age, or health care?

Are you willing to speak up? If so, Senior Resources, the area agency on aging for Muskegon, Ottawa, and Oceana counties, would like to invite you to join us in advocacy on behalf of mature adults. The more voices we have, the more likely it is we will be heard.

You are encouraged to attend the Senior Advocates Coalition (SAC) which meets the 2nd Monday of September, October, February, March, April, May, June and November at 1:30 p.m. at Senior Resources, 255 West Sherman Blvd., Muskegon Heights (just east of Seaway Drive between 7th and 8th Streets). SAC is a coalition of diverse mature adult organizations, intergeneration groups, advocates of the disability community and individuals who are willing to learn and share information about current aging/disability issues and programs and communicate with government officials and concerned citizens.

Many people find the thought of advocating for an issue with their local legislator intimidating – it shouldn't be. The legislators are in office because we voted to put them

there to represent us. We are the constituents and have the right to express our concerns and ask our legislator to consider our opinions as they cast their votes. If you would like to be on the mailing list, kept up-to-date on issues and are willing to call or write elected officials, please contact Pam at 231-733-3521 or 800-442-0054 or through email to Pam@srwmi.org. A current state level issue that needs your advocacy is how

www.michiganlegislature.org

While the Blue Cross bills whizzed through the House of Representatives last October with little public consciousness, it appears that a slower process will occur in the Senate. In an effort to push the bills through quickly, the Blues are running television and radio ads promoting the benefits of the four-bill package. But groups opposed to the bills are organizing a coalition to

[“join us in advocacy on behalf of older adults”](#)

proposed changes with Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Insurance coverage impacts older adults and those in poor health.

The Area Agencies on Aging Association has taken a position against House Bills 5282 – 5285, because they allow Blue Cross to charge much higher premiums to older subscribers and those with poor health.

They also allow the Blues to deny coverage of pre-existing conditions for as long as 12 months – current law allows for six months.

The bills also require for-profit insurers to pay into a risk pool administered by Blue Cross to subsidize premiums for people who can't afford insurance. An analysis of the bills can be found on

counter Blue Cross' persuasive efforts. Opposing the bills are the UAW, Michigan Association of Health Plans, Michigan Chamber of Commerce, AARP, Michigan State Medical Society, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, among others.

Word is that Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop has taken an interest in the bills and is personally brokering a set of substitute bills that will be introduced in the Health Policy Committee. Advocacy on these bills and others can be accomplished through phone calls, face-to-face visits at local or capitol offices, through e-mail or regular mail.

Conversations and correspondence don't have to be lengthy; they just need to clearly express your concerns.

**The Mission of ,
Senior Resources
An Area Agency on Aging:**

To provide a comprehensive and coordinated system of services designed to promote the independence and dignity of older persons and their families in Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa counties — a mission compelling us to target older persons in greatest need, but to advocate for all.



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Did you know...

The fastest way to communicate your comments, questions and opinions with elected officials is via the phone, fax or internet.
Regular postal mail is sometimes delayed due to additional security measures.

Name	District	Email	Fax	Phone
House Representative David Agema	74	daveagema@house.mi.gov	517-373-8697	1-800-968-2320
House Representative Arlan Meehof	89	arlanbmeehof@house.mi.gov	517-373-9830	1-888-238-1008
House Representative Bill Huizenga	90	billhuizenga@house.mi.gov	517-373-7806	1-866-908-4347
House Representative Mary Valentine	91	maryvalentine@house.mi.gov	517-373-9698	1-877-633-0331
House Representative Doug Bennett	92	dougbennett@house.mi.gov	517-373-9646	1-877-411-3684
House Representative Goeff Han-		goeffhansen@house.mi.gov	517-373-9469	1-877-999-0995
State Senator Gerald VanWoerkom	34	sengvanwoerkom@senate.michigan.gov	517-373-3300	1-866-305-2134
State Senator Wayne Kuipers	30	senwkuipers@senate.michigan.gov	517-373-2751	1-877-584-7377
Governor Jennifer Granholm		www.Michigan.gov	517-335-6863	1-517-373-3400

United States Senators and House Members can be accessed via the
Capital Switchboard: 1-202-225-3121.
Legislators' contact information is available at
www.congress.org