

# Alaskan Seniors Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging



Sean Parnell  
Governor

Spring 2014



William J. Streur  
Commissioner

## Commission kicks off the year with legislative session, community successes

### Alaska's Silver Tsunami!

According to the Alaska Department of Labor Population Estimates (2014), approximately 116,880 Alaskans are age 60 years and older comprising nearly 15% of the state's population. Seniors are Alaska's fastest growing demographic. The senior population has almost doubled since 2000. While Alaska's total senior population is expected to grow rapidly over the next 20 years, the number of seniors age 85 and older will increase even more dramatically.

Seniors are vital to Alaska's future. As a growing population, seniors can exercise their power in a variety of ways. Economically, seniors contributed over \$2 billion to the state's economy through their retirement income and health care spending. Politically, seniors shape Alaska's political landscape as "super voters" with many holding public office and serving in community leadership positions. Socially, seniors are devoted family caregivers and committed community volunteers who fill

the "need gap" for thousands of Alaskans. Seniors are also intergenerational mentors who prepare younger generations for their roles in Alaska's future - in the workplace, the community, and with their families. Alaska must provide ways to utilize its seniors' skills, their knowledge, and expertise to make Alaska the best place to live and thrive for people of all ages.

### Save the Date: Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium, May 1, 2014

You are invited to the Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium on May 1, 2014 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage! This symposium is sponsored by the Alaska Commission on Aging, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, ConocoPhillips, University of Alaska, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, AARP Alaska, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

The purpose of this conference is to provide Alaska's seniors and their advocates with the knowledge and tools to have

a strong voice to improve senior services, challenge communities to become more senior-friendly, create meaningful opportunities for senior civic engagement, and empower seniors to successfully age in Alaska.

The Symposium will offer information on a variety of topics of interest to Alaskan seniors and baby boomers.

Keynote speaker, Jeannine English, AARP President-Elect, will discuss "caregiving" as a pressing issue. As the number of older adults needing care rises, the number of potential caregivers will decline sharply over the next twenty years. In the face of rising demand for caregiving and a shrinking pool of family caregivers, Ms. English will discuss the critical need for a comprehensive person- and family-centered caregiving policy that provides better supports for family caregivers, a strong and stable workforce, and greater efficiencies in cost control and public spending. Other symposium speakers will cover topics related to cultivating opportunities for senior civic

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger** is a quarterly publication of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA).

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to advocate for policies, programs, and services that promote the dignity and independence of Alaska's seniors and help them maintain a meaningful quality of life.

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[www.AlaskaAging.org/publications.htm](http://www.AlaskaAging.org/publications.htm)



## Director's Corner

By Denise Daniello

*(continued from page 1)*

engagement; improving senior health and wellness; addressing Alzheimer's disease; providing innovative long-term support services and supports for family caregiving; and senior housing.

The symposium will begin at 8:00 a.m. with refreshments and lunch provided free of charge. Continental breakfast will be offered at 7:30 a.m. All are welcome and encouraged to RSVP using the form provided in this newsletter. Please join us for this important discussion on the "Power of Aging in Alaska." For more information about the Symposium, please call the Commission at 907-465-3250 or email us at [hss.acoa@alaska.gov](mailto:hss.acoa@alaska.gov).

### ACoA Legislative Advocacy Priorities

The Commission convened in Juneau during mid-February for our quarterly board meeting and to meet with legislators to discuss legislative priorities for Alaska seniors and their caregivers. ACoA and AgeNet, the statewide coalition of senior service providers, coordinated the annual legislative fly-in to jointly advocate for two budget priorities to improve services for older Alaskans

and their family caregivers. ACoA Commissioners met with Governor Parnell and forty-two legislators.

### ACoA Budget Priority #1

The Commission supports increased funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program. This is an existing program administered by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services to provide greater supports for unpaid family caregivers who care for elderly family members with compromised health conditions, including Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, and for a growing number of grandparents being called upon to raise their grandchildren. These services provide case management, respite, training, counseling, supplemental services, and peer support. Research shows that family caregivers who receive supports feel less stressed and better able to provide quality care longer for their loved ones at home. Family caregivers make an important economic contribution to the care of people needing long-term support services. Without the availability of family caregivers, the economic cost of long-term support services to the state would be exponentially higher.

### ACoA Budget Priority #2

The Commission supports increased funding for the

Nutrition, Transportation, and Support Services (NTS) to serve more Alaskans age 60 years and older needing these services to help them maintain their health and independence. NTS services, administered by the Division of Senior & Disabilities Services, provide seniors with home-delivered meals and a welfare check; congregate meals served at senior centers, adult day programs and other group settings; assisted transportation; and homemaker services. These services are important for all older Alaskans but especially critical for seniors who are recovering from a fall, illness, or surgery and those who are transitioning from an assisted living home or skilled nursing care facility back home. These services also help seniors who are not eligible for the Medicaid waiver

or Personal Care Assistance but still require assistance to help maintain their independence.

### **ACoA Policy Recommendations**

In addition, ACoA is advocating for five policy recommendations. First, we support continuation of the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program which is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2015. This program provides a crucial financial safety net for income-eligible Alaskans age 65 and older. ACoA supports HB 263, sponsored by Representative Mike Hawker, to continue the program with a six-year sunset review. Second, ACoA advocates for increased availability of affordable and appropriate senior housing by increasing the amount of funding for Alaska Housing

Finance Corporation's Senior Citizen Housing Development Grant Fund and by supporting public-private partnerships to promote growth in senior housing. Third, ACoA supports improved services for persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ARD) through (1) increased funding for senior grant-funded services to serve more seniors with ARD and their family caregivers; (2) implementation of the 1915(i) Medicaid waiver to provide cueing, supervision and other waiver services for persons with ARD who do not meet levels of care; and (3) development and implementation of the first-ever Alaska State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia. Fourth, the Commission supports efforts to enhance the sustainability of Alaska's Aging and Disability



## **The Do Not Call Registry**

A great idea for seniors is signing them up for the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Do Not Call Registry.

Since 2003, Americans have been able to opt out of receiving most telemarketing calls by putting their phone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry, and millions of them have done so. The Registry now reports having more than 221 million telephone numbers on it, giving these consumers a little more peace and quiet during their dinner hour.

Not only is the Do Not Call program wildly popular with consumers, but it also helps telemarketers operate more efficiently by screening out consumers who do not want to be contacted. The DNC Registry website is [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). A Spanish-language version is also available. The Registry only contains phone numbers, no other personally identifiable information, and they do not keep a record of whether the numbers are land line or cell phones.

There are some exemptions to the Do Not Call rules. Because of the limits to FTC's authority, the Registry does not apply to political calls or calls from non-profits and charities (but the Registry does cover telemarketers calling on behalf of charities).

Also, calls from legitimate "survey" organizations are not covered because they are not offering to sell anything to consumers. Finally, calls are permitted from companies with which you have done or sought to do business. Specifically, a company can call you up to 18 months after your last business transaction.

Courtesy FTC News  
Release 2014

Resource Centers that provide information/referral and options counseling for seniors, persons with disabilities, and their family caregivers. Finally, we support efforts to reform Alaska's durable power of attorney statute by incorporating provisions of the model Uniform Power of Attorney Act to further protect vulnerable older Alaskans against financial exploitation and to make Alaska's Power of Attorney laws interstate compatible protecting seniors when they are away from home.

## **Senior Legislative Advocacy Teleconferences**

The Commission hosts the statewide Senior Legislative Advocacy Teleconferences to review and discuss legislative items of interest to older Alaskans during session on alternating Thursday mornings 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and weekly during the last month of session. These teleconferences, accessible at participating senior centers, provide a great opportunity to get the inside scoop on legislation that affects Alaska seniors and how you can actively support bills and budget items benefiting seniors. For more information about these teleconferences, please contact ACoA Planner Lesley Thompson, 907-465-4793, or visit the ACoA website to find dates and meeting locations for upcoming teleconferences.

## **Juneau Elder-Senior Community Forum**

The Commission hosted a community forum at the Juneau Senior Center in mid-February to learn about issues affecting Juneau seniors as part of our needs assessment activities to develop the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services, FY2016-2019. The forum was well-attended by local seniors and caregivers. We received great input regarding what's working well and areas in need of improvement for programs serving Juneau seniors. The most appreciated community assets identified by the forum participants included Care-A-Van assisted transportation service provided by Southeast Senior Services, free borough bus services for people age 65 and older, and the Senior Property Tax and Senior Sales Tax Exemptions. Lack of Personal Care Assistance (PCA) services, limited availability of senior assisted living home options, and the need for a larger Juneau Senior Center were the three greatest needs identified by participants. We thank the Juneau Senior Center, especially Carol Comolli, site manager, and her staff for their hospitality in providing us with a comfortable meeting place for the forum.

Until next time...



Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director

# Who are the Seniors of Alaska?

BY PETER T. ZUYUS

We are your parents, grandparents, great grandparents, friends and neighbors. The state of Alaska has bestowed the Senior designation upon us at the tender age of 60 and gradually increases our Senior benefits until full realization at age 65.

We paid income taxes, property taxes, sales taxes and all forms of fees for over forty years. We contributed to the Social Security system and Medicare system throughout our lives. When we began our contributions to Social Security it was called "contributions to your retirement fund," not the current term "entitlement program." Medicare taxes were a prepayment of retirement medical insurance.

We built the roads, schools, buildings and many of the places people now call home. We built those once secret sites like White Alice, RCS and BMEWS. When times were tough we worked two, or three jobs to make ends meet. We looked at adversity and said we can get through this.

Alaska's Senior veterans fought the wars of the 20th Century, protecting democracy and freedom around the world, while keeping our homeland safe.

Seniors were brought up to respect their elders and honor them for the sacrifices they made to keep our nation free. Gentlemen would rise and seat a woman when she came to the table and always offered his seat to a lady or elderly person on a crowded bus or train. (Probably illegal today)

We recited the pledge of allegiance, hand over heart each morning without fear of being ridiculed. Many recited a prayer to start the day (yes, in public school).

We built the Alaska pipeline and worked the oil fields, built the Parks, Richardson, Glenn and Sterling highways connecting Alaskans to Alaskans, and rebuilt Anchorage after the quake of 1964 and Fairbanks after the flood of 1967.

We are the fisher men and women who built our great fishing industry, and welcomed tourists with open arms to enjoy the beauty of the Kenai, Cordova, Seward and towns around the State while building local businesses and communities.

We built the infrastructure of utilities and technology that so many now take for granted. Wireless, Internet, television, communications technology did not fall from the sky. It was not always here. The Seniors of Alaska built it.

The Senior women gave birth to the next generation of "Seniors in Waiting."

We live on our own, with assisted living, in retirement homes, in Pioneer homes or with our children. We are all successful in our own ways. We have always praised and respected those who worked hard and were fortunate in their finances. We lent a hand to those needing assistance, but we do not decry those who do not.

As did our parents, we turned over the mantle of leadership to the next generation assuming they would have the same view and respect their elders like we do. This is not always the case in some political circles.

So, who are the Seniors of Alaska? We are.

And who are the future Seniors of Alaska? You are.

Seniors are not an alien species thrust upon the world at the age of 65 as some would have you believe, but just like you, we were born "Seniors in Waiting."





## Older Americans Month in Alaska: May 2014

**In May, we celebrate “Older Americans Month in Alaska” to recognize the contributions and achievements of older Alaskans. The theme for the 2014 celebration is *Safe Today, Healthy Tomorrow*. This theme focuses on injury prevention and safety to encourage seniors to protect themselves and remain active and independent for as long as possible. With an emphasis on safety during Older Americans Month in Alaska, we encourage older Alaskans to learn about the variety of ways they can avoid the leading causes of injury, which include falls.**

**Alaska’s Senior Advisory Commissions are planning special Older Americans Month celebrations. All older Alaskans are most welcome to attend!**

- **“Older Americans Month Kickoff,”** Friday, May 1 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center (1300 East 19th Street, Anchorage). The event will include Bill Popp as the keynote speaker, presentation of the Ron Hammet Award, and refreshments. For more information, please call the Anchorage Aging and Disability Resource Center at 907-343-7770.
- **“Fairbanks Senior Recognition Day,”** Thursday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Carlson Center (1210 2nd Ave., Fairbanks) hosted by the Fairbanks North Star Borough Senior Advisory Commission. Lifetime Fitness Awards, Outstanding Volunteer Awards, and Eldest Senior Male & Female Awards will be presented. A delicious lunch and entertainment will be provided. For more information and to RSVP, please call the Fairbanks North Star Borough Senior Parks and Recreation Office at 907-459-1136.

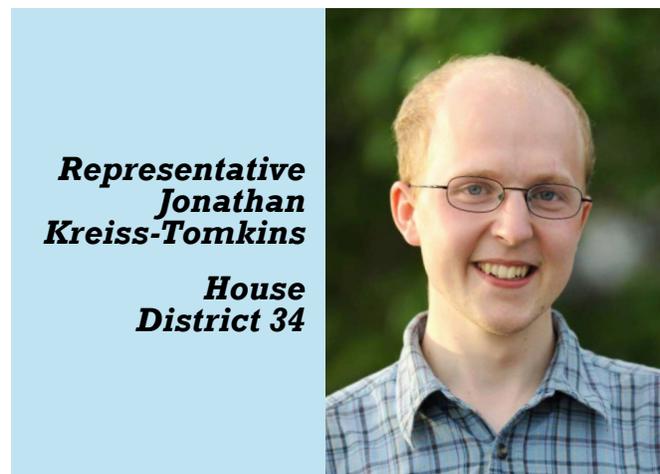




## Legislators Respond to Questions about Alaska Seniors

Currently, Alaska has nearly 116,800 persons age 60 years and older representing almost 15% of the total state population. The senior population has almost doubled since 2000 and is projected to reach almost 200,000 by 2035. Recently, the Alaska Commission on Aging posed the following three questions to legislators asking for their comments to be published in the Commission’s Spring newsletter:

- Based on what you hear from your constituents, what do you think is the most important issue facing older Alaskans today?
- What can our state do to encourage seniors to remain in Alaska as active citizens?
- How can seniors use their “power” to influence local decisions to create senior-friendly communities?



I’ve heard very little from my constituents about these issues. I have one constituent who is active with the Pioneer Home who has talked with me about funding and I’ve heard from several Retired Persons Employee Association (RPEPA) members concerned about medical care and the new Exxon system.

That is it!  
Berta

Senator Berta Gardner  
Senate District H  
Session Contact: 800-331-4930  
Interim Contact: 907-269-0174  
Email: [Senator.Berta.Gardner@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Berta.Gardner@akleg.gov)

Assisted living homes are not oases, wonderfully isolated from greater society. This stereotype along with other stereotypes related to these places should be changed. This can be done by encouraging public visitation and functions in assisted living homes and appreciating the contributions our senior citizens continually make to our great state. Senior citizens have the power to remove the connotations and the stereotypes associated with their communities. They are citizens of this country and state and are just as capable of exacting change as any other demographic.

Sincerely  
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
House District 34  
Session Contact: 888-461-3732  
Interim Contact: 907-747-4665  
Email: [Representative.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov)

**Representative  
Mia Costello**

**House  
District 20**



There are a couple issues facing older Alaskans today that my constituents have been particularly concerned about. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find doctors who cover Medicare patients. Additionally, my constituents are discouraged by the rising costs of health care.

We have just expanded senior care for five years, which may encourage seniors to remain in Alaska as active citizens. I also think seniors can have an influential role in educating young people. I would like to see more interaction between senior citizen organizations and local elementary schools.

Aside from involvement in schools, seniors can influence local decisions to create senior-friendly communities by reaching out to community leaders. They can participate by calling, emailing, signing up for newsletters, and sending their concerns and ideas along to organizations and legislators to help create senior-friendly communities.

Sincerely,  
Representative Mia Costello  
House District 20  
Session Contact: 800-773-4968  
Interim Contact: 907-269-0117  
Email: [Representative.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov)

**Representative  
Peggy Wilson**

**House  
District 33**



Thanks for requesting comments! I conferred with constituents in my district and here are the answers I received:

1. Financial security & health (depending on the individual circumstances).
2. Continue the state programs that are offered and continue to keep seniors in the conversation.
3. Making sure that we get seniors to attend meetings and make their voices heard. Just as with anything, if people are not stepping forward to comment then the assumption is that all is fine.

Regards,  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
House District 33  
Session Contact: 800-686-3824  
Interim Contact: 907-874-3088  
Email: [Representative.Peggy.Wilson@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Peggy.Wilson@akleg.gov)

**Representative  
Lora Reinbold**

**House  
District 26**



Based on what you hear from your constituents, what do you think is the most important issue facing older Alaskans today?

The senior population of Alaska has almost doubled since 2000 and is projected to reach almost 200,000 by 2035. Currently, Alaska spends \$1.6 billion on Medicaid and \$2.7 billion in the Health and Social Services Department. This number is growing swiftly, without expansion the Medicaid budget is expected to grow to \$2.5 billion by 2020.

The increasing elder population coupled with the rapidly growing cost of care demands action. This is a rapidly growing liability which must be addressed in order to provide assistance for those who need it most. I am eager to begin down the path to reform and look forward to providing access to quality patient centered market based health care for all Alaskans.

What can our state do to encourage seniors to remain in Alaska as active citizens?

With an expanding senior population, we must ensure that the regulatory environment of Alaska fosters a healthy business climate for senior services. As Chair of the Administrative Regulatory Review Committee, I have been

diligently assessing the impacts of proposed regulations to ensure they align with legislative intent of statute and to avoid the burden of regulations on the private and non-profit sectors. In order to prevent premature institutionalization and promote activity, preventive services such as those provided at community senior centers, elder day care, and assisted living homes must be enabled to thrive in a sustainable manner.

How can seniors use their “power” to influence local decisions to create senior-friendly communities?

Alaskan elders are a valuable asset to our great state. They provide years of wisdom and a critical perspective that must be heard. There are abundant opportunities for involvement throughout the state on community and state levels. In order to create senior-friendly communities throughout the state we must hear from those that our decisions effect every day.

Sincerely,  
Representative Lora Reinbold  
House District 26  
Session Contact: 800-770-3822  
Interim Contact: 907-465-3822  
Email: [Representative.Lora.Reinbold@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Lora.Reinbold@akleg.gov)



# SAVE THE DATE



## Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium

**When?** Thursday, May 1, 2014 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**Where?** Hotel Captain Cook, 939 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage

**Who?** Seniors, Baby Boomers, Caregivers, Policymakers, Providers & the Public

**Why?** To provide the knowledge & tools needed to have a strong voice to improve senior services, enhance communities to become more senior-friendly, provide more opportunities for senior community enhancement, and to empower seniors to successfully age in Alaska.

*Refreshments and lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to the Alaska Commission on Aging by calling 907-465-3250 or email to [sherice.cole@alaska.gov](mailto:sherice.cole@alaska.gov). Sponsored by the Alaska Commission on Aging, Department of Health and Social Services, ConocoPhillips, AARP Alaska, University of Alaska, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.*



# Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium

## Hotel Captain Cook

939 W. 5th Avenue, Anchorage AK, 99501

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, 8:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.

### Participant Registration Form

Please RSVP to the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) by April 25, 2014 to [hss.acoa@alaska.gov](mailto:hss.acoa@alaska.gov) or fax to 907-465-1398 or mail to PO Box 110693, Juneau, AK 99811.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Fax number \_\_\_\_\_

- Alaskan Senior  
 Senior Provider Agency Affiliation /Title (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the Symposium? Please check all that apply:

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Senior Voice \_\_\_\_\_ ACoA Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_ Word of Mouth  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to RSVP for others who will be attending the Symposium with you, please provide us with their names and contact information (email address and phone number).

<u>Name</u>	<u>Contact Information</u>	<u>Alaskan Senior? (Yes/No)</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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*Sponsored by the Alaska Commission on Aging, Department of Health and Social Services, ConocoPhillips, AARP Alaska, University of Alaska, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority*

Please note that this Symposium is *free* however, hotel and travel is at the attendee's expense. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. For more information, please contact the Alaska Commission on Aging at 907-465-3250. We look forward to seeing you at the **Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium on May 1<sup>st</sup>!**

***Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger***  
Alaska Commission on Aging  
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**Save the Date: Calendar of Events**



**Older Alaskans Month**  
May 2014

**Power of Aging in Alaska Symposium**  
May 1, 2014: Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage

**Older American's Month Kickoff**  
May 1, 2014: Senior Activity Center: Anchorage

**Fairbanks Senior Recognition Day**  
May 8, 2014: Carlson Center, Fairbanks