

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

**Steve Stern**

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR  
SIXTEENTH DISTRICT  
1842 E. Jericho Turnpike, Suite P  
HUNTINGTON, NY 11743



## PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: **Deborah Harris**  
LEGISLATIVE AIDE  
OFFICE: 631-854-5100  
deborah.harris@suffolkcountyny.gov

### LEGISLATOR STEVE STERN ATTENDS NEW YORK STATE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING FORUM

*May is Older Americans Month*



**HUNTINGTON, NY** – Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern (D-Huntington), Chairman of the Veterans and Seniors Committee addressed the Long Island session of the White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA) to provide input about the needs of local seniors to federal officials. May is “Older Americans Month,” and this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Older Americans Act, Medicare and Medicaid and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Social Security Act. The first WHCOA was held in 1961 and five subsequent conferences have been catalysts for many of the most important innovations and programs to serve Older Americans. To date, Congress has failed to re-authorize the Older Americans Act, making the need for the conference even more critical as a way to inform federal lawmakers of local needs.

Legislator Stern stressed the need for the Federal Government to reform regulations to enable our seniors to have better access to home care, as most seniors would prefer to remain in their homes, not nursing homes and home care is far more cost effective. “Federal allowances should take into account the cost of living differential for a high cost region like Suffolk County,” Legislator Stern said. “Our seniors should not be forced into nursing home care because of the failure of the Federal government to provide realistic allowances for home care.”

New senior housing built or obtained with federal funding should also conform to universal design standards, which require wider hallways and doorways, lower light switches and sinks and hand rails so that as people age, they can remain in their homes without expensive retro-fitting. “I was proud to sponsor legislation in Suffolk County that requires new construction using county funding, to conform with universal design standards,” Legislator Stern said. “These small changes enable our seniors to remain in the homes they love and the communities that they helped build.”

Legislator Stern also called for Congress to pass an Elder Care Tax Credit to provide relief caregivers with elderly parents who do not reside with them. Nearly half of all Americans between the ages of 40-50 are caring for elderly relatives and young children. These “Sandwich Generation” members spend thousands of dollars on care for aging parents, but cannot claim them as dependents. “Congress must act to provide support for those caring for multiple generations of family members. People should not be forced to choose between their parents and their children.”

The local conferences will report to WHCOA later this month in Boston. “The ‘WHCOA’ provides an important forum for local advocates, social workers, medical professionals and local elected officials to send a clear message to the Federal government,” Legislator Stern said. “We can and must do better for our seniors.”