

North Carolina



Senior Tar Heel Legislature

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A Demographic Re-Mix Expected for North Carolina as the Aging Population Increases *North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature Convenes in Raleigh*

Raleigh, NC – The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (STHL) convened in Raleigh for its first meeting of 2013. During the meeting, leaders shared future trends on aging and housing issues for North Carolina. The NCSTHL also celebrated 20 years of providing advocacy for older adults in North Carolina.

Keynote speaker, Mitchell Silver, President, American Planning Association, discussed statistics as it relates to population growth and a demographic shift over the next 30 years. Currently, the United States is experiencing a demographic re-mix. By 2030, in the US, one in five individuals will be aged 65 and older and life expectancy will be 82 years old. By 2050, the number of Americans over the age of 85 will triple from 5.4 million to 19 million. In North Carolina, we can expect individuals aged 65 and older to increase to nearly 125 percent.

In addition, Silver added that the traditional family is changing. There is an increase in multi-generational households, a decrease in marriage rates and an increase in singles living alone. As families change, the need for housing will change as well. Silver stated, “young people either cannot afford to buy a home or prefer to rent, we also expect smaller and more energy efficient homes to be in demand in the 30 years not only for single individuals but for older adults who want to ‘age in place.” According to Silver, some initiatives have been passed by local governments that address housing needs for older adults and single families. Universal design homes and cottage courts are being developed in some urban areas to meet the need of this population.

Dennis Streets, Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) expanded on the housing issue for North Carolina. “Our state will receive grant funding to provide rental assistance for extremely low-income individuals with disabilities, the North Carolina Finance Agency was awarded 12 million dollars to support more than 560 housing units,” said Streets. The initiative, called the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, is designed to offer permanent housing and supportive services to individuals who might otherwise be institutionalized or homeless. Meeting this need will help reduce health care costs, improve quality of life, and decrease homelessness.

During the meeting, the NCSTHL celebrated its 20th anniversary. Delegates and Alternates who have served ten and 20 years were honored during a special reception. The NCSTHL was created by the North Carolina General Assembly with the passage of Senate Bill 479 in July of 1993.

The 2013 legislative priorities for the NCSTHL include: 1) Maintain funding for senior centers; 2) Restore funding to sustain Project C.A.R.E.; 3) Mandate pre-employment and random drug testing for employees of nursing,

adult care homes, and adult day care facilities; 4) Strengthen and fund North Carolina's Adult Protective Services Program; 5) Recurring funds of at least \$7 million for the Home and Community Care Block Grant.

One delegate and one alternate represent every older adult in the state's 100-counties. Please feel free to contact your local delegate or the regional Area Agency on Aging. Also visit the STHL website at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/sthl.htm> as well as our Facebook page. Search for North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature. The next STHL meeting will be June 2013.