

2017 Legislative Priorities OUTCOMES

Increase Retirement Security HB 2204 and SB 1076

Our primary state advocacy issue this year was the “Work and Save” campaign, which aimed to enact legislation that would create workplace savings options for the more than 1 million Virginia workers who don’t have access to a retirement savings plan through their employer. Our Work and Save campaign was successful in building awareness of the issue, recruiting legislative champions (Sen. Frank Ruff and Del. Luke Torian), and even getting a draft bill introduced.

The bill would create a new program based on one being implemented in Washington state. Based on some very recent challenges experienced by the Washington program in its roll-out this year, we decided to take more time to consider an appropriate model for the Commonwealth. So we talked with our legislative sponsors and adapted our strategy. Over the course of 2017, we’ll continue to build awareness of the need to help these Virginia workers build nest eggs while developing a more promising Virginia-based solution. We intend to have a new bill ready for introduction and passage in 2018.

Strengthen Financial Exploitation Laws HB 1945

One of the silent crimes of the 21st century is financial exploitation of older adults. Thanks to 2016 legislation, the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) studied the issue and determined the annual financial cost to Virginians. The study estimated that over \$28 million was lost by the 1,016 Virginians who had a verified case of financial exploitation. This year, House Bill 1945 passed and when it goes into effect those who exploit older adults in Virginia are more likely to be investigated and prosecuted and we can only hope, convicted. DARS plans to launch a state public education campaign via social media to break the silence and raise awareness so older adults do not lose the assets they have earned over a lifetime hard work. Since the perpetrator is often a family member, witnesses and victims tends to see it as a family matter and do not report the crime to law enforcement. It is estimated that only 1 in 44 crimes is reported.

Support Family Caregivers HJ680

We supported the establishment of a legislative committee to study issues and challenges facing the more than 1 million family caregivers in Virginia. Although the bill failed to make it through committee, we used the opportunity to educate all 140 legislators through our advocacy day bringing nearly 100 grassroots advocates to the General Assembly. Supporting family caregivers will continue to be a priority for AARP Virginia.

OVER

Fully Fund Long-Term Care Ombudsman Services

Budget amendment sponsored by Senator Barker, Item 333 #4s

Many long-term care recipients are medically or emotionally too frail to speak up for themselves. The state Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which acts as the voice for these individuals to resolve care problems, prevents suffering and unnecessary hospitalization and saves taxpayer dollars. For the second year in a row, AARP Virginia advocated for \$2.1 million to be appropriated to meet the minimum staffing standard (1 Ombudsman for every 2000 nursing home and assisted living beds) set by the General Assembly. The current staffing ration is approximately 1:3500. We will continue to advocate for this funding knowing that we may not win until there is a year when the state has a budget surplus.