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Public hearing

Suffolk County Senior Citizens Task Force

Suffolk County Legislature

300 Center Drive

Riverhead, New York

April 26, 2007

9:30 a.m. - 2:47 p.m.

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2 Senior Citizens Task Force Members and Appointees:  
3  
4       Legislator Stephen H. Stern, Chairman  
5               Veterans and Seniors Committee Chairman  
6  
7       Susan J. Harty, Town of Huntington  
8  
9       Thelma White, Town of Riverhead  
10  
11       Mary Ann J. Barone, Appointee  
12  
13       Elizabeth Lorenz, Town of Islip  
14               Commissioner of Human Services  
15  
16       Karen McLaughlin, Town of Southold  
17  
18       Pamela Giacoia,  
19               Town of Southampton Senior Services  
20  
21       Christopher Halucha,  
22               Town of East Hampton Dept. of Human Services  
23  
24       Tanya Gilliard, Town of Babylon  
25  
26       Rita A. Glasheen, Town of Smithtown  
27  
28       Priscilla DeMasi, Appointee  
29  
30       Holly Rhodes-Teague, Director  
31               Suffolk County Office of the Aging  
32  
33       William I. Stoner, AARP Representative  
34  
35       Karin Bennett, Town of Shelter Island  
36  
37       Robert Kern, Seniors Against Discrimination  
38               Senior Consumer Advocate  
39  
40       Nicholas Maletta, Town of Brookhaven  
41  
42       Carolyn Gallogy, Office of the Aging  
43               Task Force Liaison  
44  
45       Eugene Pritz, Task Force Liaison  
46               US Department of Health and Human Services  
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1 4-26-07

2 MR. STERN: Good morning. And I thank  
3 everybody for being here with us today.

4 This is the second of a series of four  
5 public hearings of the Suffolk Countywide Senior  
6 Citizens Task Force. And before we get started this  
7 morning I'm going to ask everybody here to please  
8 rise.

9 (Pledge of allegiance) (Moment of silence)

10 MR. STERN: Okay. We have a wonderful crowd  
11 with us today. And I know my fellow task force  
12 members are looking forward to hearing all of the  
13 wonderful input today.

14 We have dignitaries with us here today,  
15 professionals within our community we're looking  
16 forward to hearing from. But before we begin with our  
17 testimony, what I'm going to ask is that maybe we can  
18 go around the horseshoe and give all of our task force  
19 members the opportunity to briefly introduce  
20 themselves.

21 MR. STONER: Good morning. William Stoner,  
22 Associate State Director of AARP responsible for Long  
23 Island, Staten Island. Statewide responsibilities  
24 include livable communities or housing,  
25 transportation, and coordination of services.

1 MS. GLASHEEN: Rita Glasheen, Town of  
2 Smithtown, Director, Senior Citizens Center.

3 MS. WHITE: Thelma White. And I represent  
4 the Town of Riverhead.

5 MS. DEMASI: Priscilla DeMasi. And I'm the  
6 executive director of San Simeon by the Sound. We're  
7 experienced in education and longterm care.

8 MS. GIACOIA: Pamela Giacoia, Director of  
9 Senior Services for the Town of Southampton.

10 MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Karen McLaughlin, Director,  
11 Southold Town Human Resource Center.

12 MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: Holly Rhodes, Suffolk  
13 County Office for the Aging.

14 MR. KERN: Bob Kern from SAD, Seniors  
15 Against Discrimination.

16 MS. HARTY: Sue Harty, Director of the Town  
17 of Huntington Senior Division.

18 MR. HALUCHA: Christopher Halucha for the  
19 Town of East Hampton.

20 MS. BARONE: Mary Ann Barone, concerned  
21 senior citizen from Bohemia.

22 MS. BENNETT: Karin Bennett, Senior  
23 Citizens Center Manager for the Town of Shelter  
24 Island.

25 MR. PRITZ: Gene Pritz, media consultant at

1 the United States Department of Health and Human  
2 Services and a member of the Suffolk County Office for  
3 the Aging.

4 MS. LORENZ: I'm Elizabeth Lorenz. I'm  
5 Commissioner of Human Services for the Town of Islip.

6 MS. GALLOGY: I'm Carolyn Gallogy,  
7 chairperson for the advisory board to the Office for  
8 the Aging. And I'm at St. Joseph College.

9 MR. MALETTA: Nicholas Maletta, and I've  
10 been asked to represent Brookhaven Town.

11 MS. WEINER: And I'm Deborah Weiner, Steve  
12 Stern's volunteer. I help coordinate this task force.

13 LEGISLATOR STERN: As everybody can see, we  
14 have a wealth of experience and demonstrated  
15 commitment from so many different areas  
16 geographically, levels of government and involved with  
17 so many people who do not just have great experience  
18 but a commitment to our senior citizen community.

19 My name is Stephen Stern. I am the Suffolk  
20 County legislator representing the 16th Legislative  
21 District, which makes up parts of Huntington and  
22 Babylon. And it is also my privilege to serve as the  
23 chairman of the Suffolk County Legislature's Veterans  
24 and Seniors Committee

25 And I bring with me to this position really

1 a story that stays with me really every day. I'm a  
2 coach in my son's little league of seven year-olds,  
3 and we have a lot of fun with it. And I have to tell  
4 you that there is not a day, not a game that goes by  
5 where some parent doesn't come up to me and ask, you  
6 know, could you please put my son a little further up  
7 in the order, could you please put my daughter out on  
8 the pitcher's mound, their grandparents are here. And  
9 which, of course, is a great thing. And they'll say  
10 that the grandparents are here to watch the game and  
11 this is the only game that they're going to get a  
12 chance to see this season. And we'll get into talking  
13 about the reasons why.

14 Inevitably, it comes out that the  
15 grandparents live out of state, they live down south,  
16 they live out west. And we see it, like I said, just  
17 about every game. And because of my interest in this  
18 very important issue that affects all of our  
19 generations in our entire community, from west end to  
20 east end, we'll get to talking about why they live out  
21 of state. And it's wonderful to hear the stories  
22 about how our retirees want to move out of state to  
23 live that retirement lifestyle under palm trees and  
24 play eighteen holes of golf every day. And that's a  
25 great thing. But, by far, the majority of them tell

1 me that they had to move out of our community in  
2 search of a lower cost of living. And that's wrong.  
3 That's wrong. And it affects not just our seniors who  
4 have done so much to build our community, but this is  
5 very much a family issue that affects all of our  
6 generations.

7 So many of my generation who move away from  
8 Long Island don't come back to Long Island in search  
9 of a lower cost of living. It is unfortunate that so  
10 many of my generation and our children won't have the  
11 same kind of strong close family relationships that  
12 earlier generations had the opportunity to enjoy with  
13 a much closer knit community and people staying home  
14 and caring for elderly loved ones and their children  
15 at the same time when it was much more possible to do  
16 that. And so I view this commitment to our senior  
17 citizen community not just as a commitment to seniors  
18 themselves but to their families.

19 And that was really the vision of this  
20 committee, this task force, and charging the members  
21 of this task force to not just come up with ideas but  
22 to listen, to listen to those that serve our seniors  
23 in our community, and, most importantly, to listen to  
24 seniors themselves on how we, whether it's the county  
25 level of government or any level of government, can

1           come together to provide the services that seniors and  
2           their families need to ensure their quality of life.

3                       So this task force was formed to hold public  
4           hearings throughout Suffolk County that would be  
5           geographically diverse, not to talk about issues like  
6           Social Security and Medicare, although you have some  
7           feelings about that we'll certainly listen, but to  
8           come up with real concrete ideas and proposals that  
9           we'll actually be able to implement in the short-term.

10                      We all know that our senior citizen  
11           population is increasing, and it's an issue that we  
12           not only have to face now, but certainly in our very  
13           near future, issues like affordable housing for senior  
14           citizens, access to public transportation, access to  
15           quality long-term care. And how do you provide  
16           long-term care to seniors and the disabled within our  
17           community in the place that they want to receive that  
18           long-term care, which, of course is in their homes.  
19           And I have yet to hear, in over fifteen years of  
20           experience working with seniors and the disabled, one  
21           time that senior citizens would rather receive their  
22           long-term care in a nursing home or some type of  
23           facility rather than in their own homes and remain in  
24           the communities that they love and helped build.

25                      So this task force is charged with looking

1 at issues like affordable housing, recognizing the  
2 value of family caregivers, taking into account  
3 different family situations and support systems,  
4 knowing that we have to value those family caregivers  
5 that are kind of now stuck in the what we call  
6 sandwich generation of having to care for their  
7 elderly parents and their young children at the same  
8 time. How do they plan for their own retirements? Do  
9 they keep on working? Do they take time off? Do they  
10 give up a career altogether to provide much needed  
11 care to their parents? And, of course, this is very  
12 much an economic issue, as well, all generations.

13 We have to come up with ways, really  
14 innovative ways to attract support and maintain  
15 professional caregivers in our community, specifically  
16 out here on the east end, which include home health  
17 aides, nurses and other professionals right here in  
18 our communities. But it's also important to keep in  
19 mind that our senior citizen population is a very  
20 diverse population across all different cultures and  
21 religions and economic classes. And, certainly,  
22 geography on Long Island and Suffolk County has a role  
23 to play as well.

24 And it's also important to keep in mind that  
25 not all seniors are frail and dependent. Those that

1 are approaching retirement age need to be considered.  
2 And so this task force will also be looking at very  
3 important issues like volunteering and second careers  
4 and how to work with labor departments on how to  
5 maintain economic viability within our community, and  
6 training for second careers, all critically important  
7 to all of our seniors here in Suffolk County.

8 And we all have to remember that we have to  
9 be proactive, protecting seniors from financial and  
10 economic scams and ID theft, fight and protect the  
11 senior citizens from the scourge of elder abuse,  
12 programs to keep senior citizens active and involved  
13 in their communities, particularly when it comes to  
14 playing an important role in the mental health of our  
15 seniors and disabled.

16 It would be unfortunate for us to continue  
17 to develop new ideas and new services to keep seniors  
18 viable and active and fit in our communities without  
19 taking into account that issue of mental health. It  
20 would be a shame on all of us if we did not give a nod  
21 to the issue of mental health and do whatever we can  
22 to stem the tide, unfortunately, the rising tide of  
23 suicide amongst our senior citizens throughout our  
24 community. And enhancing nutrition programs can, of  
25 course, play a role as well.

1                   But you can see, by the makeup of the task  
2 force here, that it was important to me to have a task  
3 force that is representative geographically throughout  
4 Suffolk County. And, particularly, you can see so  
5 many representatives of the individual towns. Because  
6 our federal government, our state government, even our  
7 county government can come up with wonderful ideas to  
8 serve seniors in our community, but ultimately the  
9 delivery of those services is left to the towns.

10                   So this is a task force that is charged not  
11 just with coming up with good ideas or taking those  
12 ideas that are already out there, but implementing  
13 them in action that we can see throughout our  
14 community. And the people, the professionals, the  
15 organizations that ultimately implement those services  
16 are at the town levels. And that's why this task  
17 force I think is very well represented by those that  
18 serve our seniors among the towns, and it's great to  
19 see them as part of the process.

20                   I think ultimately the goal of this  
21 committee is to ask one simple question, and that is:  
22 Is it good to grow old in Suffolk County?

23                   VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE: No.

24                   MR. STERN: This task force will examine  
25 that question. And at the end of our work, at the end

1 of issuing a report, at the end of coming up with good  
2 ideas, ones that we can implement, ones that we can  
3 fund, ideas where we can turn at the end of the day  
4 and say that we made a difference, we will do all that  
5 we can to ensure that the answer to that question is  
6 yes.

7 So I look forward to hearing from everybody  
8 here with us this morning. And just to let everybody  
9 know, we invite everybody to participate.

10 I have a pretty good handful of cards here.  
11 So what we're going to do is try and stick very close  
12 to a three-minute time limit. But if we need to go  
13 over the three-minute time limit if there are  
14 questions from task force members, then we'll do that  
15 today.

16 What I'd like to do first is, before we get  
17 to the cards, we do have elected officials and those  
18 that represent very important agencies here with us  
19 this morning. First of all, let me welcome Supervisor  
20 Scott Russell of the Town of Southold. I introduce  
21 the Honorable Scott Russell.

22 (Applause)

23 SUPERVISOR RUSSELL: If I knew I was gonna  
24 start first I would have put the clove drop in my  
25 mouth.

1 VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE: How about using  
2 those empty chairs to let those people sit down?

3 LEGISLATOR STERN: We'll give everybody the  
4 option to either stand at the podium or sit at the  
5 table.

6 VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE: I mean instead of  
7 standing there, let them sit at the table. Nobody is  
8 sitting there.

9 (Applause)

10 SUPERVISOR RUSSELL: Thank you, Legislator  
11 Stern. And I want to thank this task force for  
12 providing an opportunity for public input in helping  
13 you reach, certainly, most important goals that we've  
14 established.

15 Southold Town, I wrote written comments  
16 which I'll be submitting for the record, but I just  
17 want to more or less summarize what I've said.

18 Southold is probably a good indicator of  
19 what Suffolk County can expect in the next ten to  
20 twenty years. Actually, the population in my  
21 community, nearly thirty percent of the population is  
22 over the age of 65.

23 I'm very proud of the work that Karen  
24 McLaughlin has done as my human resources director,  
25 and Holly Rhodes-Teague, the work she's done, and

1 their ability to work so well together and provide so  
2 well for the seniors in my community.

3 Southold's senior services program,  
4 established in 1974, stands as one of the first Town  
5 sponsored nutrition sites. We are very proud of this  
6 and the work they've done over the years serving over  
7 one and-a-half million hot meals to eligible senior  
8 citizens, 250,000 one-way passenger trips for  
9 essential transportation needs, 50,000 volunteer calls  
10 to homebound seniors, and over 700,000 hours of care  
11 to seniors needing care for a loved one that, because  
12 of their frailty or impairment, could not remain at  
13 home alone.

14 We've done quite a bit. The challenges,  
15 however, are great, and they're growing. And I think  
16 you had referenced earlier the need of the County and  
17 the Town to work together. That's absolutely true. I  
18 think that no single governmental entity can rise to  
19 the challenge and, over the next several years, the  
20 challenges of transportation, the challenges of  
21 quality of medical care and quality of care at home.

22 I recently had two seminars regarding  
23 opportunities to create affordable senior housing. My  
24 seniors in my Town, they're leaving in droves. We  
25 need them there. We need their volunteerism. We need

1 their spirit. We need to keep our family members in  
2 our Town. We're looking for ways of doing that. We  
3 are trying to work with developers and others.

4 As you had referenced, the need is for not  
5 just the Town and the County, but I think all entities  
6 need to come together to address these challenges over  
7 the next several years. We need to continue a good  
8 piece of cooperation and enhance that spirit of  
9 cooperation to provide so many of these desperate  
10 needed services.

11 Like I said earlier, we had a couple of  
12 seminars regarding senior housing. But when I had  
13 those seminars, a lot of the senior concerns were  
14 taxes. We need help from the State on alleviating the  
15 tax burdens on senior citizens. I was an assessor for  
16 fifteen years and I know that seniors have been paying  
17 into the cost of running schools, towns, counties for  
18 a long, long time. I think we need to find more of a  
19 relief for senior tax bills. We need the state's help  
20 for that.

21 (Applause)

22 SUPERVISOR RUSSELL: I know there's a lot of  
23 people that want to speak.

24 LEGISLATOR STERN: I want to thank you  
25 again. And I know that the challenge is there, and I

1 know we can't do it alone.

2 SUPERVISOR RUSSELL: I look forward to  
3 working with this task force and with other  
4 governmental agencies and with the private and public  
5 interest sectors to meet the challenges as they come  
6 in the next ten or fifteen years. And thank you  
7 again, very much.

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you so much.

9 (Applause)

10 MR. STERN: Next let me invite Tom Ranane to  
11 come and speak to us. It is a great pleasure. We  
12 welcome Director Tom Ronayne, Director of the Suffolk  
13 County Veterans Services Agency.

14 I have to tell you that it has been a great  
15 pleasure to work with Director Ronayne as a partner  
16 when it comes to providing much needed services to our  
17 senior citizens and certainly to our veterans  
18 throughout Suffolk County. Tom has been extremely  
19 active in working with both the administration and my  
20 committee, with veterans and senior citizens, and has  
21 been just a tremendous champion for veterans and their  
22 families.

23 Welcome Director Ronayne.

24 MR. RONAYNE: Thank you very much.

25 Chairman, members of the Task Force, thank

1           you for this invitation to appear here this morning.  
2           My remarks, I'll be brief, very brief.

3                         Within the Veterans Services Agency there  
4           are many, many entitlements and benefits to which all  
5           veterans, their dependents, their spouses and their  
6           survivors are generally entitled. It's difficult for  
7           me to nail down and say specifically that any one or  
8           the other is senior citizen specific, but there are  
9           several, and I'd like to just touch briefly on them.

10                        Before I get into that I would also like to  
11           mention that in this building we do have offices for  
12           the Veterans Services Agency. If anybody has any  
13           specific questions or concerns that they would like to  
14           speak to the Veterans Services office with regard,  
15           please feel free to visit the office on the second  
16           floor of this building at any time during the course  
17           of today or any other day. That said --

18                        Probably the two most frequently accessed  
19           services relative to seniors in the veterans  
20           population are the homecare and the home allowance  
21           benefits which a veteran is entitled who is unable to  
22           meet any of the tasks of daily living and requires the  
23           assistance of another person to accomplish those  
24           tasks. This is an allowance available through the  
25           Veterans Administration. And we do a lot of the work.

1 We'll prepare the paperwork. We'll advocate on your  
2 behalf in submitting and prosecuting the claim for  
3 those benefits. That benefit is known as Aid and  
4 Attendance. And, simply stated, it's just that,  
5 financial assistance provided to the veteran or the  
6 family members of the veteran who require assistance  
7 in meeting the tasks of daily living. This benefit is  
8 also available to the nonveteran spouse of veterans.  
9 This is very significant.

10 Another benefit would be what we call DIC,  
11 dependency indemnification, which is, in essence, a  
12 survivors benefit, a financial benefit, a check you  
13 receive every month, if eligible, upon the passing of  
14 the eligible veteran. Very important.

15 Again, we talk about the high cost of living  
16 on Long Island. These benefits are fairly substantial  
17 and provide a very meaningful difference in the lives  
18 of those veterans and survivors who receive them, and  
19 they should not be overlooked.

20 I think, specifically with the veterans, the  
21 senior veterans, we see more in the World War II and  
22 Korean population that veterans and their spouses are  
23 reluctant to access services. The prevailing attitude  
24 has been I do not need it and if I take advantage of  
25 this benefit someone who needs it more than I do will

1 not receive it. And nothing could be further from the  
2 truth. These benefits exist for you. You served,  
3 you are entitled to these things, and you should be  
4 receiving what you're entitled to.

5 There are many, many more that I could speak  
6 on. I know that you have a full schedule in terms of  
7 speakers. But I would encourage anybody with  
8 questions to please contact our office at 853-VETS,  
9 853-8387.

10 There are just multiple services, again,  
11 that are too lengthy to get into specifically right  
12 now, would take far too much of your time. But it is  
13 important that you access these services. They're  
14 here now. And we're committed to seeing that you  
15 receive what you are entitled to.

16 MR. PRITZ: May I ask, Tom, I want to  
17 congratulate you. I attended a session last Friday at  
18 Brentwood Community College. I would say they had  
19 about twenty different agencies.

20 MR. ROMAIN: Thirty-three.

21 MR. PRITZ: Sorry. I didn't count them.  
22 But the services that you offered, you are to be  
23 commended. And the only thing I would suggest is, the  
24 next time you hold one, a little better publicity.

25 MR. RONAYNE: Thank you very much. I very

1 much appreciate that.

2 We really tried to get the word out, and we  
3 were moderately effective in doing so. I'm partially  
4 grateful we didn't do a better job because we were so  
5 surprisingly overwhelmed, had such a tremendous  
6 response. I very much appreciate that.

7 LEGISLATOR STERN: I also want to say  
8 congratulations on such a great effort, Tom. When it  
9 comes to programs, particularly the Aid and Attendance  
10 program, which is such an important program but,  
11 unfortunately, so underutilized here in our community.  
12 It's a program that can literally make a difference  
13 between being able to remain in one's home or having  
14 to seek a higher level of care. We can really at all  
15 levels of government do a better job at publicly  
16 advertising that and so many other programs throughout  
17 our community.

18 MR. RONAYNE: What we've been doing in the  
19 last two years is increasing, as time goes on, public  
20 awareness, the outreach. That includes through the  
21 media, the media outlets doing public service  
22 announcements, including things in the local  
23 newspapers, the Pennysavers, the Long Islander type  
24 newspapers, the community newspapers, providing  
25 information on different services. One month we may

1 target one service and the following month we would  
2 focus on another service.

3 Aid and Attendance is one that we'll be  
4 focusing on more so in the coming months because of  
5 how important it is and how valuable it is. It  
6 potentially represents a very significant amount of  
7 money coming into the household of the veteran or the  
8 eligible surviving spouse.

9 One of the important things to note on the  
10 Aid and Attendance is the money does not have to be  
11 used to pay a licensed home healthcare professional.  
12 You can be receiving assistance of a family member, of  
13 a child, of a grandchild. The money is not earmarked  
14 and intended that it be paid to a specific licensed  
15 home health aide. So this money is truly additional  
16 income into the house that can be used for groceries,  
17 insurance, bills, certainly for care to the veteran or  
18 the spouse.

19 But to respond to your question, we'll be  
20 doing more in the coming months in terms of public  
21 information and getting this information out.

22 I also provided a handout to the members  
23 this morning, a similar handout, which is really  
24 nothing more than a printed version of a power point  
25 presentation that we offer. Copies of this will be

1 sent out to all the legislators in Suffolk County, and  
2 that will be available through the individual  
3 legislators' offices for their individual  
4 constituencies.

5 LEGISLATOR STERN: Anything else for the  
6 record?

7 Tom, thanks so much.

8 MR. RONAYNE: Thank you so much.

9 (Applause)

10 LEGISLATOR STERN: Let's see. Louise  
11 Massaro. And on deck will be Grace Swift.

12 MS. MASSARO: Good morning. My name is  
13 Louise Massaro and I am chairperson of the Brookhaven  
14 Senior Advisory Board. And one thing that I came here  
15 to say is that I was very, very disappointed that the  
16 Director of the Office on Aging of Brookhaven wasn't  
17 asked to be one of your members. I was very shocked.  
18 Because Donna Benaggi has been working very, very hard  
19 for the senior citizens. In fact, we are working so  
20 hard that if you go by 25A you can see that the old  
21 Rose Caracapa center will be our first senior center.

22 I don't know how come she was overlooked,  
23 but I think she deserves to be on your board.

24 (Applause)

25 MS. MASSARO: Another thing that I am very,

1 very interested in is transportation. I get so many  
2 phone calls from seniors calling me and saying Mrs.  
3 Masaro, how do we get to a doctor, how do we do this,  
4 how do we do that. And I know we have a jitney, but  
5 sometimes it takes a long time to get an appointment.

6 Hypothetically, you're fine today. You go  
7 to bed and you're still fine. During the night you  
8 get sick. You're sick all night. You call up your  
9 doctor the next morning and he says, Okay, come in,  
10 I'll check you over. You can't call the jitney  
11 because you need an appointment.

12 The people who call me tell me, they say,  
13 well, sure, I can get a taxi but it's twenty-five  
14 dollars to go to Patchogue. You have to spend  
15 twenty-five dollars for your taxi. And I think that  
16 is even one way. You have to pay your copayment.  
17 They give you a prescription. You have to pay for the  
18 prescription. Do you know how much that costs a  
19 person who's on a fixed income? It is really, really  
20 very, very difficult.

21 Last week I was visiting my daughter in  
22 Syracuse and I was sitting on the porch. That place  
23 it snows all the time. Every time you look around  
24 there's more snow. But I was sitting on the porch in  
25 the cold and all bundled up, and a bus came by.

1 Buses were coming by and they were lit up, and it said  
2 "Call a Bus". And I thought, oh, my God, what a good  
3 idea. Isn't that a terrific idea, call a bus?

4 Well, I called the number that was in the  
5 yellow pages. And they told me that they have a  
6 system there that if you call you don't have to wait a  
7 long time, like three weeks or whatever, to call a bus  
8 to take you to a doctor. So I hope you look into it.  
9 It's very, very important. That's another issue.

10 Another issue is, it's true what the  
11 gentleman Mr. Stern was saying about grandparents. I  
12 was one of those grandparents. My husband was  
13 transferred to Florida and we lived there for nineteen  
14 years.

15 When we went there he had the whole state of  
16 Florida. We traveled a lot there. And I noticed so  
17 many people who had to leave their grandchildren and  
18 move and didn't have any idea what was going on. And  
19 when it was time for them to get sick -- We were the  
20 new people on the block, so to speak, like the  
21 teenagers, because it was many years ago. And these  
22 people, I would call their children and say, Your  
23 mother, Your father is very ill. And the children  
24 would say, Can't make it, I have children, I don't  
25 have the money. And I saw so many of them die alone.

1           It's a horrible feeling.

2                     It's a horrible thing to see. You go into a  
3 funeral home and you're the only one sitting there  
4 looking at the body. It was horrible. It was just  
5 horrible.

6                     So I know what it is. And it's coming from  
7 the heart. You don't want to be alone. And that's  
8 why I came back, because after my husband had seven  
9 bypasses my son said, I know you like Florida very  
10 much, Mom, but you want to be there if something  
11 happens to your husband? And I said, No, you're  
12 right. And I came home. And I'm enjoying everything  
13 about it.

14                    So let them stay here if they want to.

15                    Thank you.

16                    (Applause)

17                    LEGISLATOR STERN: Before you go, Miss  
18 Massaro, before you go, do you have some idea as to  
19 what the approximate wait time is when someone calls  
20 for transportation until they're able to get an  
21 appointment?

22                    MS. MASSARO: I guess it varies. That you  
23 have to ask Donna Benaggi. She would know more about  
24 the jitney system than I do. All I know is I get  
25 calls from people who call me up, because I am the

1 chairperson of the advisory commission, and they tell  
2 me, you know, you have to wait a long time, call in  
3 advance, like three weeks or so.

4 LEGISLATOR STERN: So what you're saying  
5 is, from what you hear, the time to wait is weeks?

6 MS. MASSARO: Three weeks.

7 Is that right, Donna?

8 MS. BENAGGI: Three weeks.

9 MS. MASSARO: And it's so hard, especially  
10 when you're on a fixed income if you have to call a  
11 taxi. So many people say that to me. It's very, very  
12 difficult. And my hands are tied. I say, I wish I  
13 could do something for you, but I can't.

14 We should have maybe a few jitney buses who  
15 are on standby for emergencies or something like that.

16 When I get back to Syracuse I'm going to  
17 look into it further. I will go and speak with  
18 someone there to help me understand.

19 I know geographically it's very, very  
20 difficult on Long Island compared to let's say  
21 Syracuse and that area. But I want to know. Because,  
22 in fact, I spoke with Mr. Levy and I told him about it  
23 when I came back, and he said he would look into it.  
24 It is so important. They need transportation.

25 People tell us, Why don't you give up your

1 license? It's a horrible thing to give up your  
2 license because then you have no choice, you have to  
3 walk or rely on mass transportation. That should be  
4 number one, Steven.

5 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thanks so much for your  
6 comments.

7 (Applause)

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Let me also say --

9 AARP REPRESENTATIVE STONER: Just one quick  
10 comment, please. And for everyone in the room  
11 transportation is clearly one of the hot issues, if  
12 you will, when it comes to our fifty plus population.

13 And just as an FYI, AARP is currently  
14 working with agencies in Suffolk County and Nassau  
15 County and the New York Metropolitan Transportation  
16 Council to put on an event sometime in the fall,  
17 September or October on three overarching issues.  
18 Walkability and land use. The second is driveability  
19 of a community. And the third is access to public and  
20 private transportation. And it's not only going to be  
21 an event to highlight the concerns and talk about some  
22 of the practices that are working, but also to create  
23 work groups and start implementing some of the  
24 recommendations that we get from this task force and  
25 also from that day's event.

1                   So, you know, most every agency will be  
2                   invited to attend and to become a participant in the  
3                   working groups, and hopefully create longevity for  
4                   these issues and a persistent force to try to make  
5                   policy changes and systems changes. Just FYI.

6                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

7                   Before we get to our next speaker let me  
8                   say, and I'm glad Ms. Massaro brought it up, let me  
9                   say welcome to Donna Benaggi from the Town of  
10                  Brookhaven who is here today.

11                  (Applause)

12                  LEGISLATOR STERN: I'd like to say thank you  
13                  for the years and years of outstanding work and  
14                  dedication you have provided to seniors throughout the  
15                  Town of Brookhaven. Good to see you.

16                  Next is Grace Swift.

17                  MS. SWIFT: I'll pass.

18                  LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

19                  Paul Connor?

20                  MR. CONNOR: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and  
21                  esteemed task force. My name Paul Connor, President  
22                  and CEO of Eastern Long Island Hospital. And I'm  
23                  pleased to talk to you here today about the care of  
24                  our seniors, and specifically mental health.

25                  You heard Scott Russell talk about the Town

1 of Southold and the fact that we have double the  
2 number of seniors per capita in the whole county, the  
3 largest concentration of seniors certainly per capita  
4 in the whole state. He's right. We look now like  
5 what the rest of Long Island will look like in the  
6 next twenty years.

7 ELI, Eastern Long Island Hospital is a small  
8 hospital. We were the first hospital in Suffolk  
9 County. And we're a geriatric facility, both primary  
10 and secondary hospital, and also mental health.

11 Mental health and access to mental health  
12 services on the north fork and Shelter Island is  
13 challenging, and this is primarily because we have  
14 this service gap of providers. We don't have enough  
15 providers for these services to meet the needs of this  
16 population.

17 The geriatric population at this point  
18 doesn't have access to a private psychiatrist in the  
19 community because there are none. We have one  
20 provider in Mattituck, and it's in a clinic setting,  
21 and, yes, a good provider, but not necessarily  
22 suitable for the needs of this population.

23 However, I am here with some hope today and  
24 some good news. And the news is that there are three  
25 or four services that we are contemplating to

1 establish a partnership with, a partnership not only  
2 with other providers but with the Office of Mental  
3 Health and with the State of New York as well.

4 First I'm happy to tell you that we have two  
5 psychiatrists through Stony Brook who are establishing  
6 private practices in the Town of Southold. They're  
7 limited, but it is a start. And it's important that  
8 working with Eastern Long Island Hospital, the Town of  
9 Southold, and certainly with Karen, we're going to be  
10 able to drive as much practice to these individuals  
11 that's proper to ensure, one, that the seniors gets  
12 healthcare, and, two, that these doctors economically  
13 can stay within the Town of Southold. This is a huge  
14 challenge for all providers.

15 The other piece of good news is that through  
16 partnership with the New York Health Partnership, and  
17 that is South Oaks, Town of Southold, Eastern Long  
18 Island Hospital, we have received a grant from the  
19 Office of Mental Health that's focusing on mental  
20 health for the seniors in the Town of Southold.  
21 And really we're going to establish this program to  
22 improve access, screening, referrals and integrate  
23 physical and mental health. This is the first time  
24 we've had a service like this established for this  
25 particular population, and I'm looking forward to

1 working with our partners.

2 Through a grant and our Senator Ken LaValle,  
3 Eastern Long Island Hospital will establish a  
4 Geriatric Center of Excellence, and a fundamental  
5 component of that will be mental health. It is only  
6 through their partnership, these public private  
7 partnerships, can we establish these types of services  
8 because no one can do this alone.

9 We all have our work cut out for us here.  
10 But maintaining a dialogue, this type of forum for  
11 this type of discussion, we need to be able to focus  
12 on these issues to make progress in the establishment  
13 of these services.

14 Thank you so much.

15 (Applause)

16 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

17 And we look forward to the establishment of  
18 that center and tracking your progress.

19 I think Holly Rhodes, director of the Office  
20 of the Aging, has a question.

21 MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: Congratulations to you  
22 on the grant. I know that's a pilot program, and  
23 we're hopeful that will provide good information for  
24 those around the state and in Suffolk County as well.  
25 So congratulations on that.

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thanks, Holly.

2                   MS. GALLOGY: One of things that we know  
3                   about mental health and aging is that a lot of the  
4                   sadness and loneliness and so on that goes into a  
5                   depression sometimes is one of the things that happen  
6                   with aging. And since these are so common out here,  
7                   all these losses, is part of one of these projects  
8                   that you've set up here to train peer counselors,  
9                   people who are in the community, for example, widows,  
10                  people who have already gone through the experience to  
11                  help other widows make that transition?

12                  MR. CONNOR: That's a very good question.  
13                  And I'll answer it by saying that the establishment of  
14                  the Geriatric Center of Excellence has an education  
15                  program. As a matter of fact, Eastern Long Island  
16                  Hospital, the Town of Southold, once again, public  
17                  private partnership, has been working with Stony Brook  
18                  to have the Long Island Geriatric Education Center  
19                  hold six programs on the north fork. We did this last  
20                  summer.

21                  We're now applying, with Stony Brook, as  
22                  part of our geriatric center of excellence, to become  
23                  a consortium for the Geriatric Education Center and,  
24                  once again, bring those trainers, those educators,  
25                  those caregivers, and be able to train necessary

1 individuals to better meet the needs of this  
2 population. And we are looking to the population and  
3 to the caregivers and to the education providers out  
4 here on the east end to be able to come forward and  
5 help us direct this curriculum. That's exactly what  
6 we want to get at.

7 MS. GALLOGY: And I want you to know, Bill  
8 Stoner probably knows this, AARP has a backlog from  
9 twenty years ago of wonderful programs on training,  
10 helping widows become peer counselors. So you can  
11 actually draw on information, you don't have to  
12 recreate it.

13 MR. CONNOR: And I have my own personal  
14 information because my mother lives on the north fork  
15 and she's 85 and she is a widow. And that's part of  
16 the education.

17 Thank you very much again.

18 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

19 (Applause)

20 Elizabeth Anckwer?

21 Fred Marsland is on deck.

22 MS. ANCKWER: Hi. My name is Elizabeth  
23 Anckwer and I'm president of the Hampton Senior Center  
24 Site Council. I teach basic computer to the seniors  
25 and also plan fundraisers and other events such as an

1 annual spring fling and Christmas party.

2 The Town of Southampton Senior Services has  
3 all kinds of activities and programs. Some of these  
4 include: Congregate dining. Home-delivered meals for  
5 senior citizens that are too frail to come to the  
6 centers. Three different support groups; caregivers  
7 support groups, adult children support group, and  
8 grandparents raising grandchildren support group.  
9 Adult daycare. Are You Okay program, a daily phone  
10 call to seniors to make sure all is well. Help  
11 seniors with cleaning, shopping and laundry. Senior  
12 clubs. Recreation programs. Trips and special  
13 events. Education information. Health and wellness  
14 programs. Transportation. Residence repair to help  
15 keep our homes safe. And information and referral  
16 resources for our seniors.

17 As many more people live longer, the need  
18 for volunteers to assist staff with activities and  
19 programs for the seniors is huge and would be greatly  
20 appreciated. Could the task force think about how we  
21 could get more younger seniors, baby-boomers to  
22 volunteer a little of their time for the many  
23 volunteer opportunities at the senior centers?  
24 Also, these volunteers would then know where to go to  
25 get assistance for their aging parents or for

1 themselves when the time comes.

2                   Here in Southampton we have been  
3 brainstorming about volunteer jobs that might be a  
4 little different that would attract volunteers. Some  
5 examples of volunteer opportunities through senior  
6 centers are: Friendly visits to talk and possibly read  
7 to the seniors that are homebound. Field trip  
8 companion to assist those in need on trips and social  
9 events. Help at the center. If you have a special  
10 talent, share it, whether it be teaching, crocheting,  
11 knitting, painting, computers, animal care, public  
12 speaking, and so forth. Help with fundraising,  
13 intergenerational activities, clerical support,  
14 shopping assistance.

15                   If you have retired from a specialized  
16 profession, share your knowledge with others. We can  
17 always use lawyers, professional writers, library and  
18 filmmakers, photo journalists, bookkeepers, financial  
19 advisors, beauty coordinators, computer technicians  
20 for computer repairs, and pet therapists, and so  
21 forth. My thought is if we provide opportunities for  
22 people to do something useful, then they would want to  
23 come.

24                   Thank you.

25                   (Applause)

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

2                   And, of course, volunteerism among seniors  
3 is something that this task force will look very  
4 closely at. And just to let everybody know, we are  
5 well-aware of many proposals that are already out  
6 there, things that we would like to see happen within  
7 our community. We're going to be hearing shortly from  
8 Paul Arfin who has worked tirelessly on that issue as  
9 well, so we look forward to hearing from him as well.

10                  Fred Marsland is next.

11                  MR. MARSLAND: I'm Fred Marsland,  
12 representing I guess Riverhead. I run the work for  
13 the Senior Home Chore Program, which is really funded  
14 by the County and then the Town runs it. So the  
15 County does get involved in a lot of these programs.  
16 And buses and vehicles, we have a great transportation  
17 program, and I know it doesn't take more than a few  
18 minutes to call and get a ride to a doctor in  
19 Riverhead, I know that for a fact.

20                  And I'm not talking about any other Town or  
21 any other program, but it is greatly appreciated. The  
22 seniors, when I go and fix things for them, saves them  
23 a lot of money. And I'm just here to thank you for  
24 it.

25                  LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

1 (Applause)

2 MR. MARSLAND: Oh, one last thing --

3 MR. STERN: Sure.

4 MR. MARSLAND: When I heard that the last  
5 meeting didn't draw too many, I sort of took it upon  
6 my own to make up those posters that you're seeing out  
7 here. I know I stuck them in a few of the towns that  
8 didn't know about it, Southampton on Easter Sunday and  
9 Southold, and some in the senior housing places like  
10 John Wesley Village. So I hope a few of these people  
11 saw them.

12 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thanks so much.

13 (Applause)

14 LEGISLATOR STERN: Let's see. Claude  
15 Debeaumont.

16 MR. DEBEAUMON: Mr. Chairman, members of the  
17 task force. What should society do to make the  
18 elderly comfortable in their declining years? Since  
19 all of you, all of us will one day be part of this  
20 category, it is like taking old age insurance on  
21 ourselves.

22 All people suffer from loneliness,  
23 particularly when they have lost their mate. But most  
24 of them want to remain in their own homes, in the  
25 surroundings they are used to. How can local

1 government assist to alleviate this situation?

2 We need to create a pool of people, paid and  
3 volunteers, to assist in their daily chores at home.  
4 Grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing,  
5 vacuuming, even a bit of gardening. Yes, a few  
6 flowers in the yard to view from the windows cheers  
7 you up.

8 I volunteer for RSVP, the organization  
9 responsible for the creation of the calls to seniors  
10 in the morning to find out how they are, how they  
11 slept, if they have any urgent problem. One can feel  
12 how grateful they felt to receive that daily morning  
13 phone call.

14 I went to assist one particular lady who was  
15 living alone in Westhampton Beach. She had the help  
16 of a woman in the afternoon, but she had to pay for  
17 that service to a private organization. She paid an  
18 hourly fee and was concerned about the continued cost.

19 Let's put some priority to this mounting  
20 situation. Give the senior citizen centers the  
21 resources, financial and otherwise, for them to cope  
22 and assist with the ever increasing needs to help the  
23 elders, to make their elderly years happy ones, worry  
24 free.

25 Let's be realistic. When it comes to

1           considering a nursing home, how many seniors can  
2           afford to transfer to Southampton or Westhampton Beach  
3           Nursing Home? They cost over a hundred thousand  
4           dollars a year. This price is outrageous since  
5           medical treatment is not even included.

6                         I am 76 years old and I still work. Why?  
7           Inflation is not what we are told. My property  
8           assessment last year, my yearly tax, with Star  
9           enhancements, went from \$3,060 in 2005 to \$4,750 in  
10          2006. Seventeen hundred dollar increase. Fifty  
11          percent. Gasoline has climbed from \$2.16 to over  
12          three dollars in six months. In the supermarket,  
13          yesterday, orange juice has jumped from \$2.50 a half  
14          gallon to \$4.39, cranberry sauce from 89 cents to  
15          \$1.19. Gentlemen, ladies, you should go with your  
16          wife or husband to shop sometimes to see what it is  
17          all about.

18                        And I forgot one particular point. In the  
19          paper yesterday I just found out that property taxes  
20          will rise 6.8 percent the coming year. Where are we  
21          gonna go? We have to stay here. You have to help us  
22          all.

23                        Thank you for your time.

24                        (Applause)

25                        LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

1 Paul Arfin.

2 MR. ARFIN: Good morning.

3 I have a presentation and attached article  
4 that was published in the Newsday that I wrote.

5 My name is Paul Arfin and I am president of  
6 an organization called Intergenerational Strategies.  
7 And I'd like to talk about an issue that I believe  
8 transcends all of the issues, and that is how we view  
9 aging. The perception of aging. It affects our  
10 public policy. It affects how we look at our  
11 priorities, whether we provide transportation for  
12 older adults, whether we address the issues of people  
13 aging in place. If we don't address the fundamental  
14 way we look at aging, we're not gonna get anywhere.

15 To illustrate the point, I ask you to  
16 consider what age I'm speaking about in the next few  
17 statements.

18 Am I speaking of younger people or older  
19 people? They are fixed in their ways. They're  
20 belligerent. They're often forgetful. They think the  
21 world owes them a living. Their reaction time tends  
22 to be slower. They tend to "take". They're more  
23 loyal to their employer. They can't be depended on.  
24 They think they know it all. They're committed. They  
25 complain a lot. They're uncommitted. They're

1           arrogant and greedy. They're very opinionated.

2                       MEETING ATTENDEE: Teenagers.

3                       MR. ARFIN: That's my point. I could have  
4           been talking about teenagers or older people for most  
5           of those. But the truth is that most people probably  
6           thought I was referring to older adults.

7                       There are many myths about older adults  
8           permeating our country and our county, and these myths  
9           influence the attitude of older adults and not only  
10          are discriminatory but really hurtful.

11                      Between 2001 and 2010 the number of workers  
12          age 55 or older will increase by almost 47 percent  
13          while the younger population aged 25 to 64 will  
14          increase by five percent. Fifty percent of the  
15          workforce will be within striking distance of  
16          retirement in three years, just three years, 2010.  
17          So this perception of aging having negative  
18          consequences can be seen in a couple of, a number of  
19          ways.

20                      A Duke University study supports eighty  
21          percent of older people experience age-ism such as  
22          other people assuming they had memory or physical  
23          impairment due to their age. Eighty percent. A Yale  
24          University study of people over 50 suggests that  
25          people with positive self-perception live seven

1           and-a-half years longer than those with negative  
2           perceptions.

3                       I know I have only three minutes, so I'm not  
4           going to go through all I wanted to say. But with the  
5           documented trend towards continuing to work, Town and  
6           County governments, as the employers of tens of  
7           thousands of individuals, would be wise to recognize  
8           that most employees don't have the financial resources  
9           for retirement and will need to work into their  
10          sixties and seventies. So, therefore, I see this  
11          population as the "social capital", the social capital  
12          partly for volunteerism and for employment.

13                      A related issue is the transfer of knowledge  
14          to new generations of leadership. This is a major  
15          area of concern for employers worrying about their  
16          long-term and capital needs. And, in fact, the  
17          federal government in the last two years has  
18          commissioned a major study to identify job categories  
19          that are going to need to be filled because of the  
20          tremendous retirement of people with skills who are  
21          working in health and safety. And to protect the  
22          health and safety of Americans and so many jobs,  
23          technical and professional jobs are going to be  
24          without candidates.

25                      So what the federal government is doing is

1 raising the question, What can we do about this? How  
2 we can develop phased retirement programs. How we can  
3 convince more people 55 and 65 to stay in the  
4 workforce. How we can convince more people to come  
5 back into the workforce.

6 A new social contract needs to be  
7 established that recognizes the assets that older  
8 adults possess and one that reduces workplace stress  
9 and anxiety and that addresses the way work is  
10 structured and training and retraining provided.

11 I've spoken with a number of human resources  
12 professionals here in Suffolk County who say that  
13 basically it's not official policy in the company, but  
14 we don't let older people, meaning people over  
15 forty-five, know about retraining opportunities. In  
16 other words, they're on their way out. What a shame,  
17 what a terrible shame.

18 The County and Town should establish a  
19 professional public service campaign that promotes  
20 older adult employment and volunteerism. By so doing,  
21 we'll have taken a significant step towards reducing  
22 age-ism to the extent that we create new roles in  
23 employment and in volunteerism, and take a very  
24 practical step towards saying older adults have a  
25 great deal, you know, to provide and should not be

1           seen as this dependent population who is over the  
2           hill.

3                       I think that the government agencies should  
4           also provide and perhaps require their contract  
5           agencies to adhere to policies and perhaps provide  
6           incentives to them to establish policies like these  
7           that promote fairness by treating older workers fairly  
8           with no age discrimination, improving training,  
9           providing advice and guidance to older workers before  
10          they leave the workforce, offer incentives to older  
11          adults to stay in the workforce, flexible working  
12          conditions, financial rewards, including older  
13          workers, and performance appraisal and management.

14                      You know, young people, I think the average  
15          length of employment for a younger person is something  
16          like five or six years in a job. Hey, I'll take a 65  
17          year-old five or six years over a 25 year-old. Now,  
18          that's age-ist, what I just said.

19                      A lot of times we just don't give the older  
20          person the leg up in those kinds of situations. And  
21          I'll finish up.

22                      Let's recognize the invaluable qualities of  
23          older people and what they possess. These are  
24          generalities: Less impulsive to situations and  
25          people. More thoughtful perspective on work. Open to

1 new ideas or complexity in life. Greater respect for  
2 intuitive feelings.

3 Is my three minutes up?

4 LEGISLATOR STERN: Yes.

5 MR. ARFIN: It's my hope that Suffolk County  
6 government, Town governments, as employers, will take  
7 steps to distinguish themselves as leaders in changing  
8 the perception of aging and the treatment of older  
9 adults in the workforce and in the community at large.

10 Thank you.

11 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

12 I have a question. You raise so many  
13 important questions that certainly the federal  
14 government is now asking. We're asking those same  
15 questions. You, as the chairman of a commission that  
16 you recently headed, asked those questions. So maybe,  
17 briefly, you can share with us some of the specific  
18 examples of what we can and should be doing at the  
19 county level.

20 MR. ARFIN: Establishing retirement training  
21 seminars for employees in the last five years before  
22 they leave Town and County government to help them  
23 think about this fundamental question: What do I want  
24 to do with the rest of my life? What are the  
25 financial issues, the legal issues? What volunteer

1 opportunities are there? Do you need me in Suffolk  
2 County government or Town government to be an  
3 employee? That's one.

4 I'm blanking.

5 There's a lot of them, and I'd be happy to  
6 share. But I would look at AARP's website for best  
7 practices among employers who have won awards over the  
8 last few years, because they recognize this and they  
9 have created programs.

10 Nikon, for instance, in Melville, they have  
11 created a corporate culture there that basically says  
12 younger workers can have a career here into your  
13 seventies. Because they see people in their seventies  
14 productively employed. Because they have  
15 intergenerational relationships of sharing, you know,  
16 patience and other virtues that come with aging and  
17 experience, you know, than the younger upstart who  
18 maybe bounces from one job to another because he or  
19 she needs a better salary every year in order to be  
20 able to afford to live here.

21 There's a lot.

22 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

23 MR. PRITZ: Up to five years ago I  
24 conducted a retirement seminar under the auspices of  
25 AARP, and we did this at corporations and so on. In

1 the last five years the corporations have stopped us  
2 from actually coming in and doing this. So I couldn't  
3 agree with you more. We need a lot more of the  
4 corporations again offering this service.

5 MR. ARFIN: And unions, and those conducted  
6 by AARP groups and other older adult groups. There  
7 are qualified people that can volunteer to sponsor  
8 these things.

9 MR. PRITZ: Paul, there was no problem  
10 getting volunteers to help do the program. It was the  
11 corporations that stopped us because they said it was  
12 a negative thing telling people you're getting ready  
13 for retirement, which I thought was absolutely  
14 ridiculous. I couldn't agree with you more. We need  
15 more of those kinds of programs.

16 MR. ARFIN: Yes. And government can provide  
17 an example, set the example for private industry.

18 MS. WEINER: Paul's commission put together  
19 a very scholarly piece of work at the end of the  
20 commission's time, and I was wondering if it would be  
21 possible for the task force to have a copy of that  
22 manual, or whatever you call it.

23 LEGISLATOR STERN: I think that's a great  
24 idea. And I'll be sure to make a copy of Paul's  
25 commission report available for all the task force

1 members, which does have some wonderful, wonderful  
2 suggestions.

3 MR. ARFIN: Thank you.

4 Our website is listed, and if you go to our  
5 website you can download it yourself or make copies.

6 MR. MALETTA: I just want to make a comment.  
7 I've worked with retirement seminars for twenty-one  
8 years. Programs are available and they're excellent.  
9 A problem I guess will be how do we get them to the  
10 people themselves; that's really all we have to do.  
11 The programs are there, they're good, and there are a  
12 lot of them.

13 MR. ARFIN: Well, but most companies don't  
14 have that. Most employers don't have them.

15 MR. MALETTA: I'm suggesting that maybe we  
16 ought to look into some way to do it. Never mind the  
17 individual companies. However the County can do this.

18 MR. ARFIN: Well, I think it's public and  
19 private. It's a challenge. A lot of people think  
20 that they leave their job and they're gonna hit a  
21 little white ball around for the rest of their life  
22 and life is going to be good. And, yes, I agree, a  
23 lot of those folks think they know it already and  
24 they're not going to attend. You're absolutely right.  
25 That is a challenge.

1                   AARP REPRESENTATIVE STONER: Please mention  
2 your website address.

3                   MR. ARFIN: Website is [www.IGSTRATS.org](http://www.IGSTRATS.org),  
4 igstrats for Intergenerational Strategies. If you go  
5 to the website homepage, right on the front page it  
6 will say: For copy of the commission report click  
7 here.

8                   Just as an aside, it's been downloaded over  
9 a thousand times in the last year and-a-half.

10                  MR. MALETT: Thank you.

11                  LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

12                  MS. GIACOIA: I think that this is  
13 critical. You know, in order to get that social  
14 capital, we need to get help out in all the centers  
15 and all the things we do. But I think it's not just a  
16 one-shot thing with these retirement seminars. This  
17 is something that has to be an ongoing presentation to  
18 employees that are nearing that age.

19                  MR. ARFIN: I highly agree. We offer them  
20 information about Social Security, their retirement  
21 benefits, their health benefits, and that's it. This  
22 would be just as important on an ongoing basis as part  
23 of what teachers learn, what civil servants learn, et  
24 cetera. We're dealing with a potential for doing this  
25 among tens of thousands of employees and really

1           putting Suffolk County and its town governments in  
2           kind of a role model position around the country.

3                     MS. GIACOIA:  Yes.  Thank you.

4                     LEGISLATOR STERN:  Next speaker is Ann  
5           Favilla.

6                     Also, let me recognize Edna Steck, Director  
7           of Human Services from the Town of East Hampton.  
8           Thank you for being with us today.

9                     MS. FAVILLA:  Okay.  My name is Ann Favilla.  
10          I'm a senior.  I go to the Hampton Bays Senior Center.  
11          My husband passed away a year and eight months ago.  
12          And I've been volunteering at the center, and I found  
13          that to be a great joy.  It has gotten me out of the  
14          house a couple of hours a day.  And I think all of us  
15          seniors need to get out.

16                    If you lost a spouse, get out and do  
17          something to help other people, because you do receive  
18          joy from it.

19                    In the community that I live in I also check  
20          on the elderly seniors.  I've gotten a few to come to  
21          the center by speaking with them.  The meals there are  
22          great, and you don't have to cook anymore.

23                    I mean it's very difficult also for a senior  
24          who lives by themselves to prepare meals for  
25          themselves because you're used to cooking for a large

1 group of people. My husband was a big eater - I'm  
2 not. So everything is different. Everything I buy  
3 is, like a five-pound bag of potatoes, what am I gonna  
4 do with a five-pound bag of potatoes or a three-pound  
5 bag of onions? I wish they would downsize. I don't  
6 know how you can help with this, but downsize the  
7 amounts in the packages.

8 Also I would like to see the signs on the  
9 highways and the street signs a little larger. I've  
10 had a problem with my eye, so I could use a larger  
11 sign when I approach the street signs. That's one  
12 thing I would like to see.

13 And, also, like I said, I think the greatest  
14 thing is the senior center.

15 Get out. Speak to your neighbors that you  
16 know that are alone, and get them to come to the  
17 senior centers. They're grateful just talking to  
18 other people. It's a way of meeting new people and  
19 sharing and enjoying.

20 And, like I said, it brings a lot of joy to  
21 me. And I know Pam wants me to volunteer more, which  
22 I'm going to talk to her about that, because I do  
23 volunteer at other places.

24 MS. GIACOIA: I have a lot of jobs for her.

25 MS. FAVILLA: I volunteer at Hospice, which

1           they've also been great, helping me take care of my  
2           husband. And what's about it.

3                       Like I said, there is great joy in  
4           volunteering.

5                       And get my taxes lowered. And healthcare  
6           costs could get lowered also, the second health  
7           insurers. I have that with AARP, and for some reason  
8           when I moved out here they raised my rate. And I  
9           don't understand that one, but they said it goes  
10          according to where you live. So is everybody out here  
11          rich? I don't think so.

12                      LEGISLATOR STERN: The federal government  
13          seems to think so. And just to let you know, there is  
14          currently a lawsuit pending that we here in Suffolk  
15          County. The Suffolk County Legislature recently  
16          passed legislation authorizing our County Attorney to  
17          get involved in that lawsuit on behalf of all Suffolk  
18          seniors. Although it is a decision made at the  
19          federal level, we in Suffolk County government are  
20          doing what we can to help in that fight.

21                      (Applause)

22                      MS. FAVILLA: You know what else? I also  
23          found out -- When my husband was ill I couldn't leave  
24          him for too long a period of time, so I'd try to get  
25          some help so I could take care of myself a little bit.

1 I found the care, not the caretakers, but doctors  
2 don't come out here because the money's not out here.  
3 The good doctors, I'm talking about.

4 We need better doctors out here. We do need  
5 better doctors out here. And healthcare needs to be  
6 better out here. That was another thing I found out.  
7 Because I'm going back where I used to live.

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

9 MS. GLASHEEN: May I say something? Years  
10 ago the dietician came to the senior center. If you  
11 remember, Holly, she gave a presentation on cooking  
12 for one and she had the brochures with her. And  
13 maybe you can talk to Holly and she can implement the  
14 program again, because I think it was very useful.

15 MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: We do have a  
16 nutritionist and dietician on-site, and she is able to  
17 do individual counseling with seniors if they want to  
18 eat healthier, and we can do different workshops if  
19 we're asked to. All we have to do is be asked.

20 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

21 Bob Salmaggi. And on deck is Gene  
22 Bernhardt.

23 MR. SALMAGGI: Good morning. My focus is  
24 on the senior community center. Pam Giacoia is chief  
25 and she runs it like a clock.

1                   I keep hearing the younger citizenship is  
2                   leaving this terrain for parts south owing to the  
3                   humungous rise in taxes and cost of living, et cetera.  
4                   The list can go on and on.

5                   Doesn't take an Einstein to figure that the  
6                   Hamptons will eventually boil down to, uh-huh, pretty  
7                   much the Geritol generation. They have paid their  
8                   dues. They've raised families, paid taxes, helped  
9                   make the Hamptons what they are, a haven for anyone  
10                  interested in the good life. And so they deserve the  
11                  very best, a setting where they can come to relax,  
12                  shoot the breeze, as Liz so beautifully put it, and  
13                  they can talk with friends and new faces alike, scarf  
14                  up the best food around, breakfast goodies that never  
15                  end, entrees, deserts, salads. Incredible. All for a  
16                  pittance. And no one is turned down for lack of  
17                  money. And try eating breakfast at Starbucks, for  
18                  instance, or lunch at a local bistro for what you pay  
19                  at the center. No contest. And how about the string  
20                  of special events that the beautiful center staffers  
21                  cook up for us oldsters? Dancing, both line and  
22                  otherwise, entertainment, gambling, entertainments of  
23                  different sorts. Mahjong, cards, topical roundtable  
24                  discussions, birthday bashes. And, heaven forbid,  
25                  leave us not forget bingo. Don't forget those trips

1 to the Big Apple and elsewhere to catch musicals,  
2 dramas, museums, varied exhibits, and for very  
3 comfortable prices. It's amazing.

4 And someone mentioned before about the  
5 shuttle bus service, and I was amazed because the  
6 shuttle bus service that we have in Hampton Bays  
7 Center is fabulous. I had to give my, loan my car to  
8 my son because he was going for his master's, and so I  
9 was without a car. So what happens? I'm told about  
10 the shuttle bus service to Riverhead, anywhere,  
11 Hampton Bays, Westhampton. You get on the bus and  
12 you're there. A dollar. To go back, a dollar. So  
13 that is fantastic. And they're at your service. You  
14 call them a couple days before. They're so  
15 beautifully organized. It's a joy, really. You don't  
16 worry about it anymore, how am I gonna get there.

17 Don't forget those trips to the -- Well, I  
18 think I'll end it here. What I always like to say is  
19 that for the majority of our senior folk the center is  
20 not their home away from home, it is their home.

21 (Applause)

22 LEGISLATOR STERN: Gene Bernhardt. And on  
23 deck is Mari Kelly.

24 MR. RACHELLE: I will just ask a question.  
25 Is that Gene Rachelle (phonetic), 5186 Village Circle

1 East?

2 LEGISLATOR STERN: No. But you're up  
3 already.

4 MR. RACHELLE: Sorry about that.

5 LEGISLATOR STERN: No. Stay there.

6 MR. RACHELLE: I just have one or two things  
7 to say.

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Before you begin, if you  
9 can just state your name?

10 MR. RACHELLE: Gene Rachelle, and I live in  
11 Greenwood Village, Manorville.

12 What happened to the seniors tax thing that  
13 says we're gonna stop it at 70 years of age or 75,  
14 freeze it at that particular age? It's been going on  
15 for years. I'm nearing 79 and it's still not there.

16 MEETING ATTENDEE: 62.

17 MEETING ATTENDEE: 65.

18 MR. RACHELLE: One other thing. Maybe the  
19 towns, each one, in reference to some areas that get  
20 no transportation, maybe they can make an arrangement  
21 with the taxicab companies that could come and pick  
22 them up for a certain flat fee and the town would  
23 supplement it a little bit? That would be one thing.

24 And the other thing is handicap parking in  
25 the parking lots. Every time it snows, where do they

1 put the snow? Right in the handicap parking spots.  
2 And it takes you longer to get there and you're liable  
3 to slip and slide and all that sort of stuff.

4 I got many more things to say here. My  
5 other beef is with Cablevision, but you guys can't do  
6 anything about it.

7 Traffic signs. Take the vegetation away  
8 from the traffic signs. That'll help. Not so much  
9 the bigger ones. Maybe some are too small. But take  
10 the trees and vegetation away.

11 Many, many years ago, when I lived in  
12 Germany, they had a system for each small area and  
13 they took care of the roads, the vegetation, the  
14 signs. That was their thing. They didn't have no big  
15 outfits coming from God knows where. That was their  
16 job and they took care of it quite well.

17 Just last comment, if I may. Suffolk Police  
18 Commissioner said there was no unmarked cars that he  
19 had. And I was thinking about that and said wait a  
20 minute, that's not true, we see them all the time.  
21 What does he mean; he alone, or the department? Just  
22 a question. Where do the unmarked cars come from?  
23 And the reason why I think of that is how do you know  
24 whether the guy is a cop who just got a uniform, like  
25 the banker that just got shot and a number of other

1 things where they claim they're a cop? Pull over,  
2 Come with me. It's a horror.

3 Anyway, that's about all I have. I have  
4 more, but I've used up my three minutes. Take care.  
5 Thank you.

6 (Applause)

7 MR. KERN: Just in response to the question  
8 with regard to the taxes, because you had a small  
9 cheering squad as soon as you mentioned the taxes.  
10 There will be a speaker later that will be speaking,  
11 and there is a new update on the bills that are up in  
12 Albany right now. Jim Gallagher will be speaking  
13 later. We met with Ken LaValle. Jim has more updated  
14 news than that. Jim will be speaking later on on  
15 freezing your taxes. Okay?

16 MR. RACHELLE: Thank you very much.

17 LEGISLATOR STERN: Now the lady who was on  
18 deck.

19 MS. KELLY: I came here today not to  
20 complain but to thank the senior center that I came  
21 for, their great advice. And, besides that, the way  
22 they thought about my mental health while I was taking  
23 care of my husband who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's  
24 disease.

25 My own life experience, I was an RN. I

1 raised and educated seven children. And while I was  
2 doing that I was qualifying for teaching job, which I  
3 finally retired from. And yet when I was given the  
4 diagnosis, given this diagnosis, I was in denial. And  
5 that is when the help came, because I was able to take  
6 advantage of the adult care program where my husband  
7 could go a few days a week for four hours, from 7:30  
8 in the morning, and they bused him, until about 3:30  
9 in the afternoon. So I could get myself together as  
10 to what I was going to do with the rest of his day.

11 We were both veterans. And I'm glad now to  
12 hear that there are so many things. Although, I took  
13 my husband to Northport, where I was told by the  
14 social worker that there was no, no benefits for  
15 homecare for veterans, activities, daily living or  
16 anything like that.

17 So I took myself back to the senior center  
18 and with their help figured out how I was going to  
19 manage. Of course they say, Take care of yourself.  
20 It's not easy to say when you're going 24/7. They  
21 didn't have "24/7" ten years ago, that phrase. Now  
22 it's my own saying, 24/7.

23 And at the adult care center it was great  
24 because there was a leader there who had some  
25 geriatric experience, so she could lead the group.

1           And mostly the emphasis was not so much on physical  
2           care, although it was that. It was more the behavior  
3           patterns with Alzheimer's. And that is the thing that  
4           caused the most anxiety for most of the people that  
5           came to that group.

6                         Then after my husband passed away -- I took  
7           care of him for five active years. Although he had  
8           symptoms of Alzheimer's before that, I was in denial.  
9           My children would come and tell me, but I didn't want  
10          to see it. But then when it came to the point where  
11          he became immobile, I did have to get an aide to come  
12          in and help work with him and myself. And at that  
13          time then I found out and made sure I got the right  
14          thing here. The Southampton Town Senior Leadership  
15          Group, it's called. And that was looking for  
16          advocates to help other seniors, any senior to come  
17          and help with other seniors. And my husband, after he  
18          died, I felt that I wanted to join, and I figured I  
19          wanted to make a difference. I figured I had this  
20          experience that I could give to somebody that was in  
21          the same predicament.

22                        So what I'm here for is to talk about  
23          advocates. I feel that we needed advocates in the  
24          health services. We need it in the media. We need it  
25          in the AARP. We need it in the drug companies. And

1 we need it also in the medical profession so that they  
2 understand the stereotype of the older Americans is  
3 not old anymore. As a matter of fact, many older  
4 Americans are baby-boomers who are retired. They're  
5 retired. My last class when I was teaching, my last  
6 class of nursing students just retired from different  
7 jobs that they had. We were having retirement parties  
8 for them.

9 So my petition here is to get more  
10 information out to the general public or anybody that  
11 feels that they could make a difference, to become an  
12 advocate. And I also found when I was in the service,  
13 which has stuck with me for quite a while, is that in  
14 order to keep one man at the front you need more  
15 people in the field.

16 Thank you.

17 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

18 (Applause)

19 LEGISLATOR STERN: Gene Bernhardt?

20 Alice Cardiello. Ira Bernstein is on deck.

21 MS. CARDIELLO: Hi. My name is Alice  
22 Cardiello. I belong to the Southampton Leadership  
23 Group. And I attended a seminar they had on  
24 healthcare for aides for five weeks with Pam Giacoia.  
25 She is a great gal. It helped me. But I'm going to

1 give you a talk on the healthcare aides that are  
2 supposed to come and help if you need them.

3 I'd like to bring to your attention the  
4 situation which concerns the management of a very dear  
5 friend of mine, 81 years young, in relation to her  
6 obtaining adequate nursing care in her own home after  
7 suffering a massive stroke. Her husband of thirty  
8 years suffered a brain tumor four years ago, and at  
9 that time she was able to take care of him from when  
10 he returned home from the hospital until he died. Now  
11 she needs twenty-four hour care.

12 She was in a rehabilitation facility for two  
13 and-a-half months and getting the care she needed to  
14 recover from her stroke. My friend wanted to remain  
15 in her own home for her remaining years where she  
16 would be most comfortable.

17 Although she is bedridden, she is very  
18 alert. She requires constant care for bathing,  
19 dressing, meal preparation, and all facets of daily  
20 living. She was able to contact an agency that  
21 supplies aides to perform activities of daily living  
22 as well as meal preparation and light housekeeping.

23 It has been a revolving door with the aides  
24 who come to help. They don't stay that long, and many  
25 are not trained well. In fact, I had more training in

1 the five weeks I went to the program that Pam gave  
2 than what these people have. And I don't even think  
3 they have certificates.

4           Seems as though there's a shortage of aides.  
5 This results in not the best care to the client.

6           Once, during a transfer, one of the aides  
7 dropped her. Another time she was in the bathroom  
8 calling for help. The aide did not come. Who knows?  
9 Maybe she was sleeping. I don't know. She tried to  
10 get up herself, after waiting for some time, and fell.  
11 She broke several vertebrae and was in a neck brace  
12 for more than six months.

13           It has been hard on my friend becoming so  
14 disabled and having to depend on others. And yet her  
15 wish is to continue to be able to stay at home by  
16 herself.

17           My concern is, as we get older, live longer,  
18 and the need for community-based care skyrockets, we  
19 need to think about how these necessary services will  
20 be provided. We need to better educate the vital care  
21 professionals, provide some benefits for them and pay  
22 them more. It would still be cheaper than a nursing  
23 home placement, and people will be able to spend their  
24 remaining time not in an institution but at home where  
25 they want to be.

1                   Like myself, there are many seniors who do  
2                   not have family available to assist us. But when the  
3                   time comes that we need more help, we want to be able  
4                   to stay in our own home. And I thank you very much.

5                   (Applause)

6                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Ira Bernstein.

7                   MR. BERNSTEIN: Well, I want to thank  
8                   Legislator Stern for having this task force, and the  
9                   members of the task force. And I'm on the Brookhaven  
10                  Senior Advisory Board, and I wanted to mention to Mr.  
11                  Maletta, we have meetings every third Friday of the  
12                  month. We encourage you to come to the meetings. We  
13                  would like to have our director get together with you  
14                  and work on problems for all of Brookhaven and all of  
15                  the seniors on Long Island.

16                  The reason I felt so strongly to come today  
17                  was one of the things I did a couple of weeks ago was  
18                  spend some time in the state of Virginia, and I  
19                  happened to visit Thomas Jefferson's home. And I was  
20                  revitalized by some of the ideas our founding fathers  
21                  had done in creating the Declaration of Independence  
22                  and using it to get rid of the tyranny we had as a  
23                  colony of England. And we went back to the Senior  
24                  Advisory Board and we got together a document which  
25                  I'd like to read. I believe it's being distributed

1 now. This is called the Declaration of Independence  
2 for Senior Citizens:

3 We, the senior citizens of Suffolk County,  
4 Long Island, declare our frustration and indignation  
5 with the Long Island Power Authority for their  
6 unreasonably high rates and lack of sensitivity to the  
7 population of handicapped and seniors with special  
8 needs.

9 We, the senior citizens of Suffolk County,  
10 wish to remain economically independent in our homes  
11 without assistance from family or suffering from added  
12 burden of paying surcharges and excessive use fees  
13 that will ultimately force us to seek residence  
14 elsewhere.

15 We, the senior citizens of Suffolk County,  
16 do henceforth give notice to elected officials and the  
17 Long Island Power Authority Board of Directors that we  
18 will not tolerate the excessive burden put upon us  
19 that will ultimately force us to leave our homes,  
20 state and family.

21 We, the Senior Citizens of Suffolk County  
22 and Long Island, are therefore imploring you to  
23 address this issue of inequalities that exists in your  
24 organization regarding this special segment of the  
25 population. And we, the senior citizens of Long

1           Island, beseech the Long Island Power Authority to  
2           establish a committee to investigate and qualify those  
3           elders with special needs or handicaps for relief from  
4           such excessive rates.

5                         It would be rude to give names.

6                         This is being circulated not only in Suffolk  
7           County but also in Nassau County. We have contacted  
8           some legislators already in Nassau County, Mr. David  
9           Durninbaum of the Nassau Legislature, and Kevin Law,  
10          to look into this matter and see if we can get relief  
11          now. Because I've been to many senior groups over the  
12          last year and I've seen bills that range from six,  
13          seven hundred dollars because people need oxygen or  
14          because they need stairclimbers. And, according to  
15          LIPA, if you go over the 250 kilowatt hours you are  
16          labeled an abusive user of electricity.

17                        Let's make one other thing clear. Nobody's  
18          perfect. There are ways. This last week we had Earth  
19          Day, and not to give a plug to Home Depot, but they  
20          gave away a million energy efficient light bulbs. Not  
21          only that, but that also gives you an opportunity to  
22          stop global warming in its tracks. That's one of the  
23          things we, as seniors, would want to do to help our  
24          future generations.

25                        So I would say that being here, I think this

1 task force cannot just end, it should be an ongoing  
2 process. And this petition is to get action. Because  
3 we've had task forces before, and I understand there  
4 was one a couple of years ago that went to the County  
5 executive, and most of those ideas that were brought  
6 forth have not been implemented.

7 So it's my job really to be a spokesperson,  
8 as I am for many residents of Brookhaven, to make sure  
9 that all the other towns islandwide, Suffolk and  
10 Nassau, get on board. And, as Thomas Jefferson said,  
11 If government does not perform services, the People  
12 have the right to alter or change that to make it the  
13 will of the people.

14 (Applause)

15 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

16 Laurette Mulry. Johanna Siegmann is next.

17 MS. MULRY: Legislator Stern, members of the  
18 esteemed task force, good morning. My name is  
19 Laurette Mulry. I'm an attorney with the Legal Aid  
20 Society of Suffolk County. I'm very pleased and  
21 honored to be here this morning to address this task  
22 force on senior issues that we see in increasing  
23 numbers right now impacting our elderly population in  
24 Suffolk County.

25 The three issues I want to address are,

1           number one, the landlord/tenant arena specifically.  
2           Focus on mobile home tenants, and the rise in credit  
3           card debt among our Suffolk County senior citizens,  
4           and applications for mortgage foreclosures, and the  
5           large increase in the number of cases in our office  
6           with regard to mortgage fraud.

7                         George Roche, a managing attorney, did speak  
8           to this task force at an earlier meeting, and he did  
9           address that last issue and expressed that we were  
10          able to in many cases help a senior citizen to get a  
11          reverse mortgage to help in foreclosure situations.  
12          True. But there are many cases where reverse  
13          mortgages may not be too possible. So I'm going to  
14          address what we can do in those cases.

15                        First of all, in my tenure in the Senior  
16          Citizens Division, I've been there now eight years, I  
17          find that my calendar is devoted in large part to  
18          landlord-tenant cases and senior citizens being  
19          evicted in Suffolk County. Thankfully, the Real  
20          Property Actions and Proceedings Law does provide  
21          adequate safeguards for tenants rights to a certain  
22          degree and we're able to work out these cases,  
23          especially in the nonpayment arena, with help from  
24          different agencies, such as Office for the Aging,  
25          Social Services, Adult Protective Services, Catholic

1 Charities, and those are success stories. There are  
2 some that we have to go to trial for. But at least  
3 we're able to, if we can't save the tenancy, at least  
4 we're able to safely relocate these senior citizens.

5 However, there is one area where I feel the  
6 law does not provide adequate safeguards for, and  
7 that's in the area of mobile home owners and their  
8 tenancy in a mobile home.

9 There are about forty mobile home parks here  
10 in Suffolk County. And, actually, a lot of these  
11 places are closing, and therein lies the danger for  
12 these individuals who now have an asset worth up to  
13 fifty thousand dollars where they're paying a rent of  
14 maybe five or six hundred dollars a month. And, for  
15 seniors, you can see that that is viable and  
16 affordable housing for them. Yet, what happens if the  
17 landowner decides to sell that property? That puts  
18 the senior, that tenant in a very precarious situation  
19 and oftentimes facing homelessness.

20 New York State does have a law on the books  
21 that does provide some notice to those individuals in  
22 case of a land sale. But there are many states, I  
23 believe fourteen states in all, that have special  
24 safeguards, that have other laws, including the right  
25 of first refusal for the tenants as a whole to step up

1 and give a fair market value to the landowner who  
2 takes over that situation.

3 In fact, they do have that law down in  
4 Florida. I was just down there. And there was a big  
5 case down there in Collier County where a tenants  
6 rights organization in that mobile park, and that was  
7 a great success story, because then they became not  
8 only owners but managers of their own community where  
9 they have a certain self-interest and can actually  
10 reduce their own rents. Actually a very good success  
11 story I have included in the packet that I've given  
12 out. Actually, AARP has visited this particular  
13 issue, and that's included in there, as has the State  
14 Attorney General's Office and the National Consumer  
15 Law Center.

16 We would like to highlight those, too, that,  
17 one number, there would be greater notice to these  
18 individuals in case of an impending sale. Secondly, a  
19 right of first refusal for the tenants as a whole.  
20 And, if they can't get the other things, maybe get  
21 some relocation expenses from the landowner.

22 The second area of concern for our county's  
23 senior citizens that we're seeing in increasing  
24 numbers is credit card debt. And, in fact, in the  
25 last ten years the population aged 65 to 69 represents

1 the largest growing debt arena. In fact, there has  
2 been an increase of 217 percent in the amount of debt  
3 carried by that particular age group.

4 This was the generation that did not want to  
5 carry any debt, that wanted to always pay off their  
6 bills, and, unfortunately, because of, okay, a myriad  
7 of different reasons, rising housing costs, health  
8 care costs, certainly heating bills, and different  
9 transportation costs, these individuals now have to  
10 fall back on a plastic safety net, as they call it.  
11 And that is not a viable option because there is  
12 little regulation in this field of lender practices.

13 So I have included, again, in the packet is  
14 a report by the National Consumer Law Center. They're  
15 addressing this issue, and it does present  
16 possibilities for legislative reform. So I would  
17 direct your attention at that.

18 We see on our end on almost a daily basis  
19 where seniors are coming to us with a problem of a  
20 restrained bank account.

21 Even though there is a law on the books in  
22 New York State that exempts certain income from a  
23 creditor taking that would include Social Security and  
24 SSI and certain pension income, the collection  
25 agencies are still able to restrain a bank account,

1           thereby rendering those funds unavailable for a senior  
2           for maybe two, three weeks at a time until we're able  
3           to prove the exempt funds and get that restraining  
4           notice lifted.

5                         In that time a lot of things could happen.  
6           They can't pay their bills. They can't pay their  
7           rent, which might put them in the landlord-tenant  
8           arena with me. And, of course, there are the  
9           penalties they must pay to the bank because banks  
10          sinfully charge a hundred twenty-five dollars as a  
11          fee. Not only that, if you have a bounced check, it's  
12          twenty-five or thirty dollars for each check that's  
13          bounced. So I've had the scenario where an  
14          individual who had a restrained bank account really  
15          had nothing left over after they had to pay off all  
16          their fees at the end of the month.

17                        I just wanted to mention that because we are  
18          seeing that almost on a daily basis at the Senior  
19          Citizen Division.

20                        One more. Yes, I know I'm going over my  
21          time. But cases of mortgage fraud, and this comes up  
22          again in alarming numbers now.

23                        Just as a quick case scenario, we had a  
24          senior citizen who came into the office about a year  
25          and-a-half ago, a 70 year-old African-American who

1           said she was a widow surviving on widow's benefits of  
2           less than a thousand dollars a month, raising three  
3           grandchildren on her own, sole guardian, ages two,  
4           five and nine.

5                         And I am a parent, I have a husband, both of  
6           us raising three children, twelve, ten and five, and I  
7           know what a daunting task that is, even in this day  
8           and age with two incomes coming in, what it takes  
9           physically and mentally. So I can just imagine what  
10          she was confronted with.

11                        She was falling behind in her real property  
12          taxes, so she decided to take out a mortgage on the  
13          house. And, unfortunately, she ended up with an  
14          unscrupulous mortgage broker here in Suffolk County  
15          who led her into a situation where he made certain  
16          misrepresentations, and she ended up with a mortgage  
17          which she thought was going to be a fixed rate when  
18          indeed it was an adjustable rate. And she thought she  
19          would be able to make the payments, but she couldn't.  
20          He, in fact, doctored the mortgage application, we  
21          know because we were able to get our hands on it years  
22          later, to show that she had about \$2,500 income when  
23          she didn't, she only had less than half of that.

24                        She fell into thirteen months arrears. She  
25          came to us when she was already in foreclosure. And,

1 of course, the mortgage broker was really the  
2 wrongdoer. And he was, of course, referred to the  
3 District Attorney's Office. But we were able to  
4 negotiate with Ameriquest out in California to have  
5 her debt reduced, her interest rate reduced.

6 In fact, at the time she came to us she had  
7 about a 9.9 adjustable rate interest rate. And if  
8 that had continued to this date, it would be like  
9 twelve or thirteen percent. We were able to  
10 negotiate and got a 4.75 percent interest rate, fixed  
11 interest rate for her that made an affordable payment.

12 We were also able to negotiate so that they  
13 would pay her real property arrears and add that onto  
14 the end as a balloon payment such that her sixteen  
15 thousand dollars of mortgage payment arrears, again,  
16 was added onto the end of her thirty year mortgage.

17 So here at age 70 she has an affordable  
18 payment structure, she can stay in that house. She  
19 knows these three small grandchildren have a roof over  
20 their heads, and she doesn't have to worry about  
21 paying this back until age a hundred.

22 I just wanted to point out the problems that  
23 we're assisting with at the Senior Citizen Division.

24 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for coming and  
25 informing this task force. Thank you for all the work

1           you do, and your staff. But first, before you go,  
2           maybe for everybody in the rear of the room, how can  
3           people contact you?

4                       MS. MULRY: We have an office in Bayshore.  
5           It's the Senior Citizen Division. Should I give the  
6           number? 854-0401. And we handle all the county's  
7           seniors regardless of income. We just need to know  
8           that you're at least sixty years of age and residing  
9           in Suffolk County.

10                      LEGISLATOR STERN: Since you've done so much  
11           research in the area of mobile homes, and I believe  
12           there's proposed legislation swirling about at the  
13           state level, is there some role, some legal role, some  
14           legislative role for county government to play in  
15           that, or in your research in that area, is that  
16           specifically a state jurisdictional issue?

17                      MS. MULRY: Of course we would hope that the  
18           county legislature would work with the state. And  
19           this whole package that I've given to you today has  
20           gone to both the New York State Attorney General's  
21           Office and also to the state legislatures as well.  
22           So, yes, we hope that there will be a joint effort  
23           with regard to reform.

24                      But the other area that I didn't touch upon  
25           is eviction actions, not just when the property is

1           being sold. In eviction actions, what I've found is  
2           that mobile home owners really have no bargaining  
3           power, and they are really rendered helpless because  
4           now where they have an asset that may be worth thirty  
5           to fifty thousand dollars, they can't move it any  
6           more, it's not really a mobile home any longer. Once  
7           it's been affixed to that property, you know, for a  
8           number of years, a lot of the underparts are corroded,  
9           you can't move it anymore. So what happens is they  
10          have to essentially sign it away to the mobile home  
11          park owners at a much reduced price.

12                        I've seen a mobile home that was worth about  
13          twenty-five thousand dollars actually sold to the  
14          mobile home park for about six thousand dollars so  
15          that that individual could get out of that eviction  
16          process and at least take something of value with  
17          them. Maybe that's an area the county legislature can  
18          look at.

19                        LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

20                        Before we go --

21                        MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: Seems the credit card  
22          companies have everybody over a barrel, because if you  
23          make a payment one day late, or if something else  
24          happens, they're upping those rates to twenty-three,  
25          twenty-four percent. Is there a limit on how high

1           they can extend their rates?

2                       MS. MULRY:  What you'll find interesting in  
3           the National Consumer Law Center report that I've  
4           included is that right now there is really no  
5           regulation in the bank lending industry other than the  
6           Truth in Lending Act which requires certain  
7           disclosures.  But if you look at the way the  
8           disclosures are laid out, it's very difficult for even  
9           someone who is sophisticated in terms of financial  
10          affairs to really figure out.

11                      So, no, there is no substantive caps.  And  
12          that's part of what's being proposed in that NCLC  
13          report that you have there.

14                      MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:  Seems like they do  
15          whatever they want.  And if the Post Office loses your  
16          mail a day or so, it can go up and stay there.

17                      MS. MULRY:  It's almost set up to take  
18          advantage of individuals that fall into this downward  
19          spiral, and that's where they make most of their  
20          money.

21                      MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:  Thank you.

22                      LEGISLATURE STERN:  You're doing an  
23          outstanding job, and our seniors thank you.

24                      MS. SIEGMANN:  I am Johanna Siegmann, and  
25          my husband worked for twenty-five years with the

1           senior citizens. One of the last things he wanted to  
2           do before he retired when he was 87 was that he wanted  
3           to have that bill passed for 70 years of age that you  
4           do not have to have the increase in taxes every year.

5                         Now, we've talked about a lot of things  
6           today, but financially a lot of people are hurting.  
7           Now, say two hundred dollars is your tax increase, or  
8           one hundred dollars. Add that up year after year.  
9           We're living to be over eighty years of age and we  
10          need a little bit of help. Now, Eddie spoke about  
11          this a lot.

12                        I don't know if anybody from SAD is here,  
13          but that's Seniors Against Discrimination, and they  
14          had a meeting about five years ago, and all the  
15          legislators were there and the same thing was brought  
16          up. And people talk about it at our nutrition center,  
17          at our senior center, and nobody does anything about  
18          it. And it is very important to us. And I'm tired of  
19          the rhetoric that we get from our legislators. It's  
20          time to put up or shut up.

21                        (Applause)

22                        MS. SIEGMANN: And, really, I'm getting so  
23          aggravated, but I can't help it.

24                        So this is all I wanted to say. But please  
25          give us a hand. We need it, and we need it now. For

1 God's sake. Five years from now who the hell knows  
2 what's going to be left around here?

3 Thank you.

4 (Applause)

5 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She is going to be a  
7 hard act to follow.

8 I did want to just talk about two things  
9 today, and that's the two capital T's that have come  
10 up, taxes and transportation for senior citizens.

11 And, for one thing, the volunteers that give  
12 their time in Suffolk are social philanthropists. And  
13 there was a time that volunteerism was just that, it  
14 was giving up your time. Now it's starting to cost  
15 money with gas costing three dollars a gallon. Our  
16 social philanthropists have been writing a check,  
17 going to their site, and expending their energy and  
18 experience, and now they're also paying three dollars  
19 a gallon to get to the sites.

20 So I want to talk at some point about the  
21 cost effectiveness of perhaps remunerating volunteers  
22 in some way.

23 One of the ways that would be a wonderful  
24 venue is to take Assemblyman Engelbright's bill for  
25 the senior real property tax abatement Bill A-9 that's

1           circulated and ask that the towns and villages and the  
2           county use the option to give some sort of a tax  
3           abatement to volunteers that are doing community  
4           service.

5                         Last year Retired and Senior Volunteer  
6           Program volunteers gave 152,000 hours of community  
7           service, and that equated to \$2.6 million dollars  
8           worth of manpower that the county and state would  
9           never be able to begin to afford in assisting the  
10          not-for-profits in the hospitals and the facilities  
11          that we partner with, the manpower that they need that  
12          these volunteers certainly fill that gap for.

13                        So I would ask that the task force look into  
14          this bill. Because it's just going to be a nice  
15          thought at this point if it isn't advocated that the  
16          towns and the villages pick up that option to give  
17          some sort of tax abatement.

18                        You look like you're going to ask me a  
19          question.

20                        LEGISLATOR STERN: I was going to make a  
21          statement, actually, that I'm pleased to report that  
22          the legislation I sponsored passed just this last  
23          session unanimously in our Suffolk County Legislature  
24          making it the policy of Suffolk County to support  
25          Assemblyman Engelbright's bill up in Albany. So we're

1           waiting with great anticipation as to what's going to  
2           happen at the state level so that we can do what we  
3           want to do at the county level.

4                         UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That would be  
5           wonderful. And the towns and villages have to support  
6           it.

7                         The other thing is transportation. I've  
8           heard so many people talk about transportation today  
9           that I've always wondered why, with all the land  
10          that's being developed in Suffolk County, why we  
11          aren't charging back to the developers, the real  
12          estate moguls and the contractors for every senior  
13          housing unit that you're going to sell, and there's  
14          hundreds of them, for every thirty units sold why they  
15          do not fund a transportation vehicle and enough money  
16          put aside for maintenance and payroll for that driver.  
17          Say for the next ten years; and if that's put into  
18          some sort of investment funding you would be able to  
19          roll that a little bit longer.

20                        But I always have a problem with the senior  
21          housing that goes up in the middle of nowhere when the  
22          people that have to give up their keys in just a few  
23          months or years of moving into that site, and they're  
24          really stuck, landlocked. Why not give it to the  
25          private corporations that are making a lot of dollars

1 on the seniors and ask them for some help.

2 Thanks.

3 (Applause)

4 LEGISLATOR STERN: Helen Peters. And on  
5 deck is Edna Steck.

6 MS. PETERS: I'm not going to make a long  
7 speech. I'm Helen Peters. I'm 98 years old.

8 (Applause)

9 MS. PETERS: And one of the best things I  
10 ever did was to join the Bridgehampton Senior Center  
11 where I go almost every day and have a nice lunch, and  
12 I'm treated like I'm a queen. And it's one of the  
13 best things I ever did. Thank you for listening.

14 (Applause)

15 LEGISLATOR STERN: And Edna Steck.

16 MS. STECK: Good morning. Thank you for not  
17 only organizing the task force but also really  
18 listening to what the senior citizens are saying,  
19 because I think those are the best people to hear  
20 from. And I just want to say that I'm, you know, from  
21 the Department of Human Services in East Hampton,  
22 which is the most eastern part of the county. And  
23 because of our geography we have some issues, some of  
24 which have been talked about this morning.

25 We've been serving senior citizens in the

1           Town since the 1970's when the Older Americans Act was  
2           first passed. With the senior nutrition program and  
3           with the help of the Suffolk County Office for the  
4           Aging, over the last twenty-five to thirty years, we  
5           have expanded to include a major transportation system  
6           for our senior citizens, adult education, the  
7           caregivers support groups and many other things.

8                        The Town also funds some of the other  
9           services like RSVP and Dominican Sisters Helping Hands  
10          program. We helped to organize a nonprofit nutrition  
11          center for Montauk. So we serve the senior citizens  
12          on many different levels. And we're very grateful to  
13          the Suffolk County Office for the Aging and to Holly  
14          for the help that they have given us.

15                      Like everywhere else in Suffolk County, our  
16          senior population is increasing by leaps and bounds.  
17          And over these last twenty years we've seen a major  
18          change in the population that we're servicing. Back  
19          in the 1970's and 1980's most of the people using the  
20          services were in their sixties, maybe early seventies.  
21          Today we're seeing people much older, people over  
22          eighty and with more impairment who really need the  
23          services.

24                      The younger senior citizens, those of us in  
25          our sixties and seventies, are really still working,

1 still involved with families, with community, much  
2 more active.

3 So I think over the next few years there may  
4 be a shift in the kinds of programs and services that  
5 will be needed. And certainly with the baby-boomer  
6 population coming of age, they're, you know, I think  
7 they will be looking for more recreational, social,  
8 cultural volunteer activities, hopefully. But our  
9 focus is really on that older, frailer population. So  
10 demands for things like transportation are increasing  
11 daily, and our town systems are not really able to  
12 keep up with the demand.

13 And I think one big issue that was raised  
14 earlier with transportation is the inability of our  
15 town systems to respond to people who need  
16 transportation today. They can't wait. We have a  
17 forty-eight to twenty-four hour notice. Drivers are  
18 not trained necessarily to provide assistance. So we  
19 may need to look at more training for our drivers to  
20 be able to assist those elderly who have difficulty in  
21 negotiating a van.

22 In our Town what we are trying to do, we  
23 transport our people anywhere from twenty to thirty,  
24 seventy miles out of town because we have people who  
25 have to get to Stony Brook Hospital. We have people

1           who have to get to the Northport VA Hospital and to  
2           other areas much further west, not only for medical  
3           services but also for other essential services, even  
4           shopping, because we don't have the kinds of shopping  
5           facilities within our town that are really affordable  
6           for our seniors. So we take people to Bridgehampton,  
7           for instance, for shopping.

8                         One of the things we're trying to do with  
9           the transportation system is develop a volunteer  
10          system, with the Town aware of the issues with  
11          volunteers in terms of increased gas prices, insurance  
12          and whatever. We're looking to develop a system where  
13          we would be able to accept donated cars that the Town  
14          would take title to and insure and maintain so there  
15          would be no cost to the volunteer.

16                        So we're hoping that that's going to work.  
17          But we're going to need volunteers and we're going to  
18          need cars donated. And we're hoping that that will  
19          help address some of the issues in terms of those  
20          emergency calls when someone is sick and has to get to  
21          a doctor and needs their prescription.

22                        However, I think there's a much more  
23          regional approach that's necessary. And I think we  
24          need the County's leadership working with the towns to  
25          begin to develop some kind of a coordinated system so

1 that we can get people to the services that they need  
2 that are not located within the towns.

3 More and more people are having to go into  
4 Stony Brook for everything from podiatry to  
5 chemotherapy. We also have an increasing number of  
6 people on dialysis who have to be transported three  
7 days a week and sometimes very early in the morning.  
8 I think these are some of the issues that we need to  
9 look at with transportation also.

10 Out on the east end another issue is public  
11 transportation and working to try to upgrade that  
12 system so that healthy senior citizens will be able to  
13 afford that.

14 One of the other issues we have with  
15 transportation is Social Services and Social Security  
16 is located in Riverhead, which is 50 miles away from  
17 Montauk. Up until last year, for the last thirty  
18 years we've had a Social Security representative based  
19 at our senior center in East Hampton at least once a  
20 month. That was terminated by the federal government  
21 last fall. So this creates a problem for us to get  
22 Social Security.

23 Social Services is another issue. We  
24 provide our own case management in our ISA program  
25 with one full-time and two part-time licensed social

1 workers. Those social workers are spending an  
2 inordinate amount of time traveling to Riverhead to  
3 help those senior citizens who are not able to  
4 negotiate that system on their own.

5 We feel that there needs to be much more  
6 coordination and collaboration among the county level  
7 departments, the Office for the Aging, Social  
8 Services, the public Health Department to make sure  
9 that our senior citizens are getting what they need.

10 Years ago we had a Social Services worker  
11 based in East Hampton at least once a week who would  
12 be able to at least accept paperwork. Going back to  
13 that system would be a great help to us.

14 The other piece that would help us is if  
15 there was some way for the Office for the Aging to  
16 work out an agreement with the Department of Social  
17 Services so that when our social workers have to go  
18 with someone to Riverhead they can go by appointment.  
19 As it is now, seven o'clock in the morning they have  
20 to be in Riverhead and sit there and wait and wait and  
21 wait. And sometimes our social workers, between the  
22 travel time, the wait time, the interview time,  
23 they're losing a whole day with one client. So we're  
24 hoping that can happen.

25 The other two issues are home healthcare and

1           then mental healthcare. We need to increase  
2           reimbursement, Medicaid reimbursement for home  
3           healthcare, and we have to increase the pay for home  
4           health aides so we can attract them.

5                           (Applause)

6                           LEGISLATOR STERN: Thanks so much.

7                           MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: Edna, I know it's not  
8           going to make you feel any better, but our workers  
9           have the same issues yours do when we go to the DSS  
10          office. I've approached DSS about it in the past.  
11          They weren't all that helpful about it. So we'll see  
12          if we can get any better. But it is a waste of time.

13                          MS. STECK: And it costs money.

14                          MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: It does.

15                          LEGISLATOR STERN: Margaret Riebel. And on  
16          deck is Ellen Carney.

17                          MS. RIEBEL: Good morning, chairman and task  
18          force members. This morning I would like to speak of  
19          the need for better coordination of the services  
20          provided by the state, county, towns, private agencies  
21          and religious organizations that provide these  
22          services.

23                          As we are all aware, the senior population  
24          in Suffolk County continues to increase, and the life  
25          expectancy also continues to increase. The

1 consequences of these facts are that every provider of  
2 services will be stretched to their limits. Perhaps  
3 with better coordination among the various providers  
4 they could work together to guarantee that all senior  
5 citizens will have the best quality of available  
6 service.

7 I know from my own personal experience in  
8 trying to help an elderly neighbor attain home  
9 healthcare how frustrating it must be for a senior who  
10 is alone.

11 A great source of help would be for a  
12 directory of all local services available and a  
13 description of what specifically is provided.  
14 Sometimes it seems as though the services available  
15 for seniors are the best well-kept secrets. The  
16 directory just mentioned would resolve these problems  
17 for senior citizens.

18 And I just found out this morning that she  
19 is a spouse of a deceased World War II veteran. And  
20 we never knew that there is home healthcare  
21 allowances. And she is one of how many deceased  
22 veterans who could have been taken care of a little  
23 better who were never aware of this. It's so unfair.

24 Also, if possible, each agency should have a  
25 live person and not a computerized telephone system.

1 (Applause)

2 MS. RIEBEL: I know from my neighbor that  
3 many times she just hangs up in frustration with the  
4 computerized push one, push two systems.

5 I really do not know how to accomplish  
6 better coordination of services, but perhaps the  
7 members of this task force could make better  
8 coordination of services a top priority.

9 Thank you for your attention and time.

10 (Applause)

11 LEGISLATOR STERN: Margaret, thank you.

12 MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: I just want to mention a  
13 lot of time people don't know about our services until  
14 they need the services. We put out enormous publicity  
15 on the Office for the Aging.

16 If you call our office, we generally know  
17 about the other services that are out there. So our  
18 number 853-8200 can be used as a start for looking for  
19 services, and we have people on the phones every day  
20 to answer those questions.

21 I know the towns are also a really good  
22 place to start if you're in need of services for  
23 somebody over age sixty.

24 MS. RIEBEL: Years ago I did make an inquiry  
25 from the VA and they told me that as a spouse there

1 was no available services. Now, either this is  
2 something new or I'm going to pursue it further. But  
3 we did check into that and were told --

4 MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: The Veterans gentleman  
5 is up on the second floor. But in the future if there  
6 is something you need to assist, our office is really  
7 a great spot to start, or the town senior centers.

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Ms. Carney?

9 MS. CARNEY: I am yielding to my husband  
10 David Carney.

11 LEGISLATOR STERN: Mr. Carney. And on deck  
12 is Evelyn MaCarthy.

13 MR. CARNEY: I'm glad for this community and  
14 I thank the senior center for this meeting.

15 What I have to say concerns public  
16 education, because none of you are a business,  
17 unfortunately, or fortunately, so what I'm seeing here  
18 is directly the people who pay for public education,  
19 the seniors and property owners. And I don't know  
20 why, it seems not to be generally known, but funding  
21 public education is not the business of property  
22 owners. According to the New York State Constitution,  
23 Article 11 on education, section one, says very  
24 clearly the legislature provides for the maintenance  
25 and support of a system to free common schools for all

1 the children of this state. Nowhere is education  
2 mentioned anywhere in the constitution. So you can't  
3 do anything about it.

4 But I think the thing for us senior  
5 citizens, courtesy of the senior centers, to do is to  
6 get together, ask the senior centers of Suffolk County  
7 to provide transportation, as it is currently done  
8 today, for a coordinated visit of seniors, members of  
9 senior centers to Albany to talk to the governor and  
10 the legislature to respect the constitution.

11 They have refused to do anything about it  
12 because they don't finance public education as they  
13 should. They do it by the teachers union or the  
14 election of the legislators. So why should I be  
15 squeezed to finance the campaign of a legislator? It  
16 doesn't make sense.

17 We've been talking about this for over  
18 twenty years. And we've been saying the legislature  
19 should do its job. Fortunately, several people come  
20 out and say that the state should take over the  
21 funding of public education. And this is progress  
22 after twenty years.

23 So that's all I have to say. If you can't  
24 do anything about it, senior citizens and property  
25 owners should do something about it.

1                   And, finally, please, next time you organize  
2                   a meeting like this, have one for officials that  
3                   represent organizations dealing with senior citizens  
4                   and another for those who don't represent  
5                   organizations, like us. It will save you time and our  
6                   time.

7                   (Applause)

8                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

9                   And, of course, how we fund our public  
10                  education throughout New York State is an ongoing  
11                  critical issue, not just for senior citizens, as we  
12                  know, but for homeowners of all ages. And as a  
13                  homeowner myself, I feel the squeeze just like  
14                  everybody else. And even though property taxes to  
15                  fund public education is not within the jurisdiction  
16                  of county government, we have taken upon ourselves at  
17                  the county level to at least try and get involved in  
18                  some way.

19                  Suffolk County Legislature this year  
20                  established two separate commissions to study school  
21                  funding and property taxes and revenue production on  
22                  the one side and school expenditures on the other side  
23                  and how to bring some relief to Suffolk County  
24                  taxpayers. But, again, this issue is outside of our  
25                  jurisdiction. All we can do is study the issue and

1 finally do something about it and send  
2 recommendations up to Albany. But as a homeowner  
3 myself, it's something that I'm certainly concerned  
4 with on a very, very personal level as well, so I  
5 thank you for your comments.

6 Evelyn McCarthy. And on deck is Marie  
7 Rendely.

8 MS. MCCARTHY: Good morning. I would like  
9 to thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak  
10 with you. My name is Lynn McCarthy. I'm 88 years  
11 young. I am president of the Flanders Senior Center.  
12 I have been a member of the center for eighteen years.

13 The concern that many of us have is that we  
14 want to remain independent and remain in our own  
15 homes.

16 The center becomes our family.

17 Transportation is provided to those who do  
18 not drive. The center sees that we have a nutritious  
19 meal every day. Over 250 meals are delivered daily to  
20 the homebound by the Hampton Bays Center. The center  
21 educates us by having various programs such as  
22 wellness, living a healthy life, exercise, trips,  
23 movies, and an annual conference and picnic. It also  
24 offers socialization for us and needs to continue  
25 reaching for our goals of well-being in later life.

1           Playing cards, bingo, scrabble, chess and knitting  
2           keeps our minds alert. Line dancing keeps us moving.

3                       Those of us who have family that live far  
4           away can go to the center for friendship,  
5           socialization and support. It gets us out of the  
6           house so we don't become couch potatoes.

7                       The senior shuttle provides transportation  
8           to go shopping and to doctor appointments.

9                       We would like to see an expansion of our  
10          health and wellness programs so that seniors can live  
11          a healthy life and have something to keep them going,  
12          Cost-effective ways to keep everybody healthier and  
13          happier.

14                      Thank you.

15                      (Applause)

16                      LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

17                      MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Some of the Southold  
18          contingent that made it here earlier have to get back.  
19          So I just want to thank you for coming.

20                      LEGISLATOR STERN: Marie Rendely. And let  
21          me just say I'm gonna butcher the name, but Jadwiga  
22          Graboski will be on deck.

23                      MS. RENDELY: Good afternoon, task force.  
24          My name is Marie Rendely. My home is in the Township  
25          of Huntington. And I'm going to talk about some

1           senior citizen issues that aren't really scrutinized  
2           and reviewed and publicized that I think this board  
3           should consider. And one of them has to do with laws  
4           and local municipalities and their unaccountability  
5           for abuse of law enforcement and making laws that are  
6           unconstitutional that are anti-senior citizen,  
7           anti-family and anti-citizen, period.

8                         I've attended a lot of my Town Board  
9           and even Third District meetings to find out what's  
10          going on in my Town. I see prosecutions of senior  
11          citizens on their property, repeatedly being charged  
12          with the same offense of a code violation even though  
13          they're found innocent in Third District Court.

14                        The Town has the power to repeatedly charge  
15          that same citizen over and over and over again. It's  
16          not like our regular upper grade court systems. For  
17          some reason, local municipalities have a tremendous  
18          amount of power and no accountability. I've seen  
19          senior citizens being charged with violations because  
20          their grass is too tall, being threatened with arrest.

21                        The fines in my town now start at about two  
22          thousand dollars for a fine on a basic code violation  
23          of the Zoning Code of the Town of Huntington, which  
24          are two volumes that you can't even hold in one hand;  
25          takes two hands, but you can't even hold it, it's so

1 wide. They're charged over and over again. This is  
2 to intimidate them to move or sell their properties.

3 I believe there's a lot of reasons for the  
4 harassment. Sometimes a new couple, a younger couple  
5 moves into a neighborhood where a senior citizen has  
6 been living since the beginning of time, and they just  
7 don't like them so they make complaints and reports  
8 that causes harassment for them.

9 And then the litigation, they don't have the  
10 resources, they don't have the money, they don't know  
11 where to go. They don't know that the law that they  
12 are being charged with doesn't exist, or they don't  
13 know that the law they're being charged with they're  
14 not violating. They don't have anywhere to turn. And  
15 they're not here today in this crowd. They're home  
16 getting sick, physically sick of what's happening to  
17 them. And the fear, and the fact that they don't feel  
18 secure in their home, that it can be taken away.  
19 Because my Town passed a law saying that if you get a  
20 violation and you don't pay the fine, hell, we're  
21 going to put it on your property taxes. So now it  
22 doesn't matter if you're a senior citizen and you have  
23 the discount and Star Program because these violations  
24 add up. Every day the violation exists there's a new  
25 and separate violation and separate fee. Within a

1 month's time you could be up to \$10,000 in fines that  
2 can go against your property.

3 My Town has a Bureau of Violations where  
4 they get to a point, a hearing officer, not elected,  
5 an appointed person that acts as judge, jury and  
6 rulemaker in hearing violations. In other words,  
7 they're bypassing the Third District Court and regular  
8 due process that hear "innocent until you're proven  
9 guilty" and they're going on a civil basis where  
10 you're guilty, now prove yourself innocent.

11 Now, I understand there is litigation that  
12 is trying to challenge this, and I believe the Supreme  
13 Court did make a decision that it's unconstitutional.  
14 But it is going to take several years before it  
15 actually gets removed and corrected.

16 There are a number of other laws being  
17 passed by local municipalities, and my Town of  
18 Huntington is the worst.

19 For example, they passed a law for shoveling  
20 your sidewalk. Something as simple as this used to be  
21 just commercial property out here in Long Island.  
22 When there's a major snowstorm they say please stay  
23 off the roads so we can clean them up. But our Town  
24 passed a law saying that any property that has a  
25 sidewalk outside must be shoveled and remove all snow

1           within four hours of the snow stopping. First of all,  
2           who will be able to comply with that law?

3                       Say it's snowing when everyone gets up.  
4           Stops snowing at eight. No one is coming home from  
5           work for eight hours. And you want these senior  
6           citizens out there shoveling, while Harvard Medical  
7           School says this is what causes heart attacks,  
8           physical activities people are not used to.

9                       You don't hear about this because they're  
10          being targeted, select senior citizens or select  
11          property owners, because developers say I need to put  
12          a road through there because I'm going to build a nice  
13          development of several townhouses right next door,  
14          let's harass this person to the point where they have  
15          to sell, harass them to the point that they have to  
16          leave and they just can't maintain it.

17                      We've even passed laws saying if you've got  
18          peeling paint on your house you're in violation of a  
19          Town code. Some of our senior citizens are in reverse  
20          mortgages. Down the road from me, his porch was --  
21          well, in favor of reverse mortgages. I don't have  
22          money to fix my house.

23                      They've got all kinds of laws. They're  
24          telling us who we can have living in our homes. My  
25          Town has decided to define what an immediate family

1 is, and it says that's only the owner of the house,  
2 your spouse, your children, your parents, your  
3 grandchildren or your grandparents. That's it. No  
4 brother can live in your home, no sister, no niece, no  
5 nephew, no great grandchild, no great aunt. These  
6 laws are anti-family. These laws are anti-property  
7 owner. And there's nobody to make them accountable.

8 The only source is true litigation. And one  
9 single little citizen has no means to defeat these  
10 people. I brought cases myself. I'm not an  
11 attorney, just a citizen. I brought something to the  
12 Supreme Court. I won it. It's now on appeal. It's  
13 been five years, on these unconstitutional laws that  
14 are being passed.

15 The taxes. I know we've mentioned those. A  
16 woman was taken to court because garbage blew on the  
17 property because someone doesn't put their lid on.  
18 She's eighty years old. She's in court and she's in  
19 fear of losing her property because of these laws.

20 Where a veteran is complained against, he's  
21 in court for years, over and over, the same charges,  
22 even though they're found innocent.

23 Certificate of occupancy charge, that  
24 person, ten years. And I've been to the courts to  
25 hear how our Town attorneys are treating senior

1 citizens on the stand even though this person has been  
2 found not guilty. They repeatedly harass her. And --

3 LEGISLATOR STERN: If you can wrap it up --

4 MS. RENDELY: There is not enough time to  
5 cover everything. I'm going to give you a copy of  
6 some of the things I have listed here. And I can't  
7 even get to all the charges and the different laws  
8 that I would be glad to provide to you at a later  
9 date.

10 But just one point on the taxes, which is  
11 real property, if you have two properties side by  
12 side. And even with the senior citizens, the  
13 percentage of taxes they're paying based on their  
14 income is far superior than the person living  
15 next-door with two working parents and taxes.

16 I believe that property taxes for all  
17 residents throughout the county should be abolished as  
18 unconstitutional, and that our schools and our  
19 townships should be funded by income taxes and sales  
20 taxes. It would be in the best interests of the  
21 people.

22 LEGISLATOR STERN: Mr. Grabowski.

23 MR. RUTKOWSKI: Did you say Rutkowski?

24 LEGISLATOR STERN: That is how I'm reading  
25 it.

1 MR. RUTKOWSKI: My name is Vincent Rutkowski  
2 from SAD.

3 LEGISLATOR STERN: Then, no, it's a  
4 different person.

5 MR. RUTKOWSKI: Who's the different person?

6 LEGISLATOR STERN: Do we have a Graboski?

7 Okay. Then on deck is Dorothy Erb.

8 MR. GRABOSKI: I go to a senior citizen  
9 center five days. I'm happy now because I used to  
10 stay home all the time. I got to 70 years old. I'm  
11 happy because a lot of sick, not too good for me, and  
12 everyone help me. I go to doctors. Was coming to me,  
13 pick me up, go home. I'm very happy for the help.

14 Thank you very much.

15 LEGISLATOR STERN: Dorothy Erb. And Frances  
16 Henriksen on deck.

17 MS. ERB: I'm Dorothy Erb. Good morning.

18 LEGISLATOR STERN: Good afternoon at this  
19 point. Just speak into the mic.

20 MS. ERB: Hello? Can you hear me?

21 Almost two years ago I moved into East  
22 Quogue in Suffolk County from Floral Park in Nassau  
23 County, and discovered, through the efforts of my  
24 daughter-in-law, the Hampton Bays Senior Center.

25 The County could profit from the work being

1 done by the staff there to provide interesting and  
2 effective programs to satisfy the requirements of a  
3 fragile population. These projects include exercises  
4 and yoga, groups interested in walking, discussions  
5 and creative writing, clubs for books, mahjong,  
6 special seasonal and holiday events.

7 The center has a kitchen with a staff,  
8 including some with restaurant experience, with a  
9 full-time dietician who produces five hundred meals a  
10 day for distribution to recipients of Meals on Wheels  
11 and for consumption by the daycare people and by the  
12 seniors who have lunch at the center. This is  
13 distributed by a dedicated group of drivers of the  
14 shuttle buses which also take senior citizens to  
15 doctors, dentists, podiatrists, testing laboratories,  
16 as well as shopping and other necessary and local  
17 trips.

18 The center has a daycare program for our  
19 fellow senior citizens who have Alzheimer's or  
20 Parkinson diseases, and is a very necessary respite  
21 for their caregivers as well as therapy for the  
22 patients.

23 It is a remarkable operation which strives  
24 for efficiency and effectiveness, all in the interests  
25 of providing for the needs of this senior community as

1 well as for the enrichment of their lives.

2 The County should use the Hampton Bays  
3 Center as a model, with its centralized programs and  
4 supporting satellite centers in Flanders,  
5 Bridgehampton and Southampton. The County would then  
6 have senior citizen programs that should then merit  
7 statewise and perhaps national recognition.

8 It is a truly outstanding program conducted  
9 by outstanding personnel and utilized by grateful  
10 senior citizens, many of whom I have heard say that  
11 they do not know what they would do without this  
12 center. Thank you.

13 (Applause)

14 LEGISLATOR STERN: Frances Henrickson. And  
15 Elaine Kahl is on deck.

16 MS. HENRIKSEN: Good morning, Mr. Chairman  
17 and members of the task force. I am here to talk  
18 about the need for more health promotion and disease  
19 prevention programs for the senior citizens.

20 I am very fortunate. I moved to Southampton  
21 Township four years ago and got involved in the senior  
22 nutrition centers. I have a progressive disease  
23 called spinal stenosis. However, going to the centers  
24 everyday where I get a nutritious hot meal and good  
25 companionship to eat with has been very good for my

1           mental, physical and spiritual health. I also  
2           volunteer for various things at the centers and go on  
3           many trips, which help keep us from isolation.

4                       We also need more affordable healthcare,  
5           dental care and prescription drug coverage for senior  
6           citizens. Because a lot of senior citizens are  
7           neglecting going to doctors when they need to for  
8           check-ups and not taking needed medicines because they  
9           can't afford it.

10                      I myself can't afford a supplemental  
11           insurance program because of the high Medicare premium  
12           and also the Medicare Part D premium and deductible  
13           and paying twenty-five percent for my medicines. And  
14           I'm on a lot of meds because I had to have a stent put  
15           in my heart artery last year. What we senior citizens  
16           have to go through for the Medicare Part D  
17           prescription drug program is not an easy process.

18                      It would be helpful if the senior advocates  
19           that come to the centers come more often to assist us  
20           with paperwork both for the senior citizens at home  
21           and for the senior citizens who come to the centers.

22                      A lot of our senior citizens are just a few  
23           dollars over the cutoff amount to get any help. We're  
24           praying that nobody cuts back our programs that we  
25           have now as we look forward to going to our centers

1 daily as they are our home away from home.

2 We also take meals and freeze them so we  
3 have a nice hot meal for weekends and holidays.

4 Thank you for your time.

5 (Applause)

6 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

7 Elaine Kahl. And on deck is Vincent  
8 Rutkowski.

9 MS. KAHL: Good morning. And thank you for  
10 coming here on such a special occasion.

11 I am Elaine Kahl from Southampton, and I'm  
12 one of those volunteer philanthropists, and I love it,  
13 keeps me busy. But I'm here today for two reasons.  
14 Personally, I'm having a devil of a problem with  
15 Social Security for myself. I have been in contact  
16 with them for a year.

17 Many in my community ask me for help and  
18 assistance, and every year when the booklets come out  
19 our Town of Southampton has been very helpful in  
20 providing tutorials, so they come to ones they trust  
21 in the community. And I'm happy to say my house is  
22 one of the open houses for cooking meals, too.

23 Having said that, I have been in contact on  
24 Part D of the drug prescription program, and I am now  
25 paying \$29 a month, and I pay \$93.50 for Medicare.

1           Number one, I understand my colleagues in Nassau pay  
2           nothing, and I'd like to know why we down here are  
3           paying full price. And I'm sure there's a good reason  
4           why, but until this date I haven't found out why.

5                         Number two. I have been requesting of Part  
6           D for one solid year, with appropriate documentation  
7           and visits to the Social Security office, yada yada  
8           yada -- I don't want to bore you to death. They're  
9           double-dipping me in my account on the drug  
10          prescriptions because I have a coupon book. I don't  
11          want them taking money out, so now you have to keep  
12          both. I've contacted people at SAD. I've contacted  
13          family friends. I haven't gone to you, because I  
14          always felt I could be a good problem solver. So if  
15          anybody has any recommendations on how I could find  
16          some money, I would appreciate it.

17                        Number two. My taxes have increased  
18          dramatically. I am not 70 yet. I'm not 65 yet. I'm  
19          a baby-boomer on the front end, so I'm a pathfinder.  
20          I would like you to take that 70 and reverse it to 65,  
21          because, quite frankly, I'm a widow and my love was  
22          called home. And I would love to stay here with my  
23          family, and I feel as if I'm being pushed out, as many  
24          are in my community. So I'm here speaking in their  
25          behalf today. Please make it 65. I swear that I will

1 volunteer until I kneel. I will help.

2 And I love the people that, I call it  
3 "spending time with", because they're eighty and  
4 ninety, and they're all doctors and teachers and  
5 people who worked at other levels. And I tell all of  
6 them please tell me your story of life because that's  
7 what I want to hear. I think we can all, as baby-  
8 boomers, learn from you.

9 Thank you.

10 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you. Thank you for  
11 your dedication, and your clear passion is wonderful.

12 We all have our Medicare Part D stories, I'm  
13 sure. My favorite is as soon as Medicare Part D, the  
14 first time, was enacted, the secretary of Health and  
15 Human Services, the gentleman who runs CMS at the  
16 time, was so eager to explain that it only took him  
17 about an hour and-a-half on the internet to make the  
18 decision on what program he should choose for his  
19 parents. Now, this is the director of CMS. This is  
20 the federal agency that runs the program. And he has  
21 thousands of professionals at his disposal to make the  
22 right decision.

23 What does that mean, if it only takes him an  
24 hour and-a-half? And, of course, it wasn't his  
25 parents that made the decision. But this gentleman

1           who was running the entire program for the rest of us  
2           had to rely on his staff of thousands, and it took him  
3           that long to make a decision. So what really does  
4           that mean for everybody?

5                       MS. RHODES-TEAGUE: I just want to mention  
6           for the individual problem that you've having with  
7           your health insurance, you can call our office. We  
8           have a lady in our office who is running our health  
9           insurance information counseling program. She does a  
10          great job, has rapport with Medicare. She's on the  
11          floor with everybody all the time.

12                      If you have a problem, give our office a  
13          call and ask for Joanne.

14                      LEGISLATOR STERN: What I might also suggest  
15          -- And Holly and her staff do an outstanding  
16          job of running the Senior Mobile Van. And we've  
17          heard from so many today that what's needed here is  
18          not just one central location where everybody meets to  
19          get to their job and travel to doctors, but maybe  
20          greater outreach into our various communities.

21                      I know in our office we work very closely  
22          with the Office of the Aging to get that Senior Mobile  
23          Van with a professional who has the information out to  
24          our communities. What I would suggest then is getting  
25          on the phone with your individual local legislators

1 and ask them, really demand that they provide that  
2 service within your local communities as well. We  
3 found that to be quite helpful.

4 Mr. Rutkowski?

5 MR. RUTKOWSKI: Vincent Rutkowski. I'm one  
6 of the cofounders of SAD, which we started in 2003. I  
7 want to make a little correction because I don't  
8 understand why Donna Benaggi is not on this board.  
9 When I first approached Brookhaven, I live in the Town  
10 of Brookhaven, she was the first one to help us, with  
11 all her associates.

12 LEGISLATOR STERN: Mr. Rutkowski, what I'm  
13 going to do is, there are many people who would like  
14 to discuss critical issues. I've spoken with Miss  
15 Benaggi and the Supervisor of the Town of Brookhaven.  
16 That is not an issue that is really pertinent to  
17 today's purpose. If you have something that would  
18 help us out that can be helpful to all of his.  
19 There's just not enough time to --

20 MR. RUTKOWSKI: Just one more thing before  
21 I start what I want to say. As far as the lawsuit is  
22 concerned, the County Attorney didn't initiate it. It  
23 was initiated by SAD in 2003.

24 So I just wanted to mention now that SAD is  
25 fighting a number of issues. We're fighting the

1           deepening hole in the prescription plan, unfair and  
2           inadequate Social Security Cola, taxes on Social  
3           Security benefits, short-changing on Medicare  
4           benefits, and unaffordable property taxes.

5                       Now, along with that, for what LIPA is  
6           charging us, the heating oil, the gasoline, the County  
7           is making a lot more on taxes. Why can't they lower  
8           the tax on those items being that my one bill for last  
9           month, for the last five months my bill's been over  
10          \$500 a month for my heating. Along with that, I pay  
11          an electric bill of four hundred something dollars,  
12          \$250 of it is surcharge. Why can't they start  
13          lowering that?

14                      Now, besides those, look at all the taxes we  
15          pay. LIPA. We're paying high taxes, heating,  
16          gasoline. How does the government expect us to exist?  
17          If the government wants money, what do they do, just  
18          raise your taxes?

19                      Now, basically that's what I'm gonna say.  
20          Because one of my associates of SAD is going to speak  
21          on the unaffordable property taxes and that subject.

22                      That's all I have to say.

23                      LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for your  
24          comments.

25                      And just to let you and everybody else know,

1           when we talk about the issue of taxes, we hear you.  
2           And, again, as a homeowner myself, it is something  
3           that affects me and my family, as it does so many of  
4           you. So I'm actually pretty proud to say at least at  
5           the county level of government we have cut property  
6           taxes. And, hopefully, at least in our level of  
7           government, we're leading the way.

8                           And I know as well as you do that the County  
9           portion of the property tax bill is just a small  
10          portion of your property taxes, but at least at our  
11          level of government we are certainly going in the  
12          right direction. So we hear you.

13                          Carl Iacone. Anne Leikert on deck.

14                          MS. IACONE: My name is Carl Iacone, and I'm  
15          president of the Bayview Pines Civic Association here  
16          in Flanders, which is part of the Southampton Town.

17                          I'm not gonna use the word I'm here to  
18          complain because complaining does not do us any good  
19          on the particular subject I'm going to talk about. So  
20          I'm gonna use a phrase that Mr. Kern uses: I'm here  
21          to bellyache. Same thing. And what I'm here to  
22          bellyache about is our school taxes. Because I feel,  
23          and most of the people in my area and my hamlet feel  
24          that this is the one issue that concerns all these  
25          other issues, because if that's not addressed by this

1 board or any other board we're in trouble. We're not  
2 gonna have senior citizens here any longer if these  
3 taxes keep going up and up and up, which they have  
4 been.

5 I've been here twelve years, and in the  
6 twelve years that I've been here I have never seen  
7 that real property tax go down once, not even to get a  
8 breather. Let me put it to you that way. A breather,  
9 in my way of thinking, is it stays at the same level.

10 I don't know how much help that this board  
11 or this task force can do. There have been people  
12 such as Senator LaValle, such as Assemblyman Theil,  
13 and now we have Alessi trying to do what they can to  
14 establish something on this. But what's happening is  
15 a bill comes up and it's passed on. The bill is held  
16 for a while there and it's passed back. And it goes  
17 nowhere.

18 When a bill like that comes up and goes  
19 nowhere, it generally dies. I don't want to use the  
20 word "die" because at my age that's a bad word. It  
21 doesn't exist any more, let's put it that way. And  
22 it's getting out of hand, it really and truly is  
23 getting out of hand. I would really like to see this  
24 board intercede on something like that.

25 They have a couple of good bills up in

1 Albany that they're tossing back and forth. One is a  
2 cap. I've heard a few of the people here today saying  
3 that the cap on it should be 65 or lower. That's up  
4 to you people to put the cap on to satisfy what has to  
5 be satisfied. But let the federal government step in,  
6 and whatever tax is taken away and given as a benefit  
7 to the people or the senior citizens, let them stick  
8 their hands in their pockets and say, well, now we  
9 have to fit the bill. Don't send it onto the younger  
10 people. Because if I was in their group at this stage  
11 of the game I would say the same thing, why should I  
12 foot the bill for the senior citizens? And, in turn,  
13 the senior citizens say, well, why should I foot the  
14 bill for the younger generation coming up?

15 We all need education, that's part of the  
16 system. That's all part of what we live by. And if  
17 we don't have education, we're gonna be the dumbest  
18 country in the world and people are just gonna step  
19 all over us. So the thing is not to do away with  
20 education but to help people along, people that have  
21 put this country on the map.

22 These people sitting behind me, they put  
23 this country on this map. They put children out  
24 there. You know, everybody talks about the  
25 baby-boomers. What about the boom of my time where we

1           were in an environment where the stock market ceased?  
2           That was a time. That was a time. That was a mini  
3           boom in itself. And we moved on to the baby-boomers.

4                     If we don't correct this school situation,  
5           the taxes on the schools, we're not gonna move on to a  
6           new generation because we're not going to have it  
7           here. There will be nobody around to pay these taxes.

8                     You know, I go to bed at night sometimes and  
9           I say to myself, you know, a very funny thing. Our  
10          government, with all their intelligence and  
11          everything, can send somebody up to the moon and bring  
12          them back down. Yet not one of them could come up  
13          with a solution which everyone can live with an  
14          adjustment in the tax situation of who should pay it,  
15          what time, what cap should be put on it, the people  
16          that it should be given to, the government to pay for  
17          it where no one gets hurt. And I think that can be  
18          done. I'm just hoping that you people sitting up  
19          there with a little more influence on it can see that  
20          it is done.

21                    Thank you.

22                    LEGISLATOR STERN: Anne Leikert, followed by  
23           John Rosato.

24                    MS. LEIKERT: Hello, everybody. My name is  
25           Anne Leikert and I'm 62 years of age.

1                   I think a lot of problems with the senior  
2 citizens is depression. I know myself, if I didn't  
3 get into the Hampton Bays Senior Center, I was in  
4 terrible shape. I laid in my bed twenty-four hours a  
5 day and I kept saying what do I have to live for  
6 anymore? I was a caretaker since I was eighteen and I  
7 wanted to work some more. And I think that it's a  
8 very good idea that we get some help out here for the  
9 people that are in terrible depressions.

10                   I think that's why a lot of senior citizens  
11 don't come out, because they're depressed. They  
12 worked all their lives to keep their homes, they  
13 retired, and now they feel that they're not useful.  
14 But if you went to a center, you would see how useful  
15 you are.

16                   And I myself can't go to the diner and pay  
17 for what we pay for the meals at the center. And the  
18 food we get and the joy I have in talking with all my  
19 friends, I think it's a great deal.

20                   And I would like to say one more thing about  
21 affordable housing. Okay, you always say you're going  
22 to build for us senior citizens. But when I became  
23 handicapped because I had three strokes and could no  
24 longer work, I went and I looked around for affordable  
25 housing. And the cheapest I found was \$900 a month.

1 I, myself, can't afford that, by the time you pay all  
2 your utilities and everything. And I think we should  
3 have more affordable housing where you go by your  
4 income. I think it would be more helpful and more  
5 people, senior citizens would say thank you.

6 And I would like to say thank you for having  
7 me at the Hampton Bays Center because I really enjoy  
8 it. It's like my second life.

9 (Applause)

10 LEGISLATOR STERN: John Rosato, followed by  
11 Elke Ginocchio.

12 MR. ROSATO: Hello. My name is John Rosato.  
13 I live in Hampton Bays and I've been there for the  
14 last seven years. I lived here before in the  
15 seventies when I was working on Shoreham.

16 And I never really went down to the senior  
17 citizens center that much because I didn't have to.  
18 But, as time goes on, I lost my wife and now I do go  
19 down. Pam is the head. And I met a lot of nice  
20 people at the senior center.

21 I walk down to the center, because I have  
22 diabetes, and since I've been eating meals there the  
23 VA doesn't even know how everything went perfect, my  
24 blood levels and all my numbers are down low, and they  
25 can't figure it out. But I think it's the meals that

1 I eat there, because I have my main meal at twelve  
2 o'clock. But not only that, I meet all the fellows  
3 and all the people there, and it's a nice place to be.  
4 And I enjoy it.

5 I think everybody covered everything they  
6 wanted to cover today, and I just repeat what they all  
7 said, and I back them all up. Like this fella said,  
8 if you don't do something you're not gonna have  
9 another generation of people here. And that includes  
10 me.

11 I like it here. I remember the first time I  
12 came here was in '66. I worked on the locks and I  
13 repaired them. And I seen the inlet and fell in love  
14 with Hampton Bays. And I'm here now, retired here.

15 But in nineteen whatever it was, 1996, 1997  
16 when I built my house, my taxes were \$2,600 a year. I  
17 took the Town to court twice and won. Now they've  
18 tripled. I'm at eight thousand. How far are you  
19 gonna go? There's got to be a cap somewhere.

20 And I'll be honest with you, May 1st they're  
21 going to come out with the taxes. If they don't put  
22 it under a rein and get the taxes down, I'm planning  
23 on leaving. I'm one of them, because you can't  
24 afford to pay that kind of money. What is it going to  
25 be ten years from now?

1                   But as far as everything else everybody  
2 covered here, they're right. Whatever they said,  
3 they're right. And they should put a cap on it.

4                   But as far as the senior citizens center  
5 goes, without it I think a lot of people would be  
6 lost. They have good programs. They have nice people  
7 there. It's a place to go. They're friendly and  
8 there you're accepted, which is nice.

9                   And I really don't have that much more to  
10 say because everybody did cover what they had to  
11 cover. With your input and your influence, you can do  
12 something about it.

13                   And Pam, I don't know her that well, but I  
14 do know she's done a good job the last six or seven  
15 years. I met her through Marge and she is fantastic.

16                   (Applause)

17                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Elke Ginocchio. And on  
18 deck is Robyn Berger-Gaston.

19                   MS. ADEMCHEK: Good afternoon. My name is  
20 Ruth Ademchek (phonetic). I work for the Town of  
21 Southampton Senior Services, and I'm the assistant  
22 manager of the Hampton Bays Senior Center and the site  
23 coordinator of Meals on Wheels.

24                   MS. CINOCCHIO: And I'm a member of the  
25 Hampton Bays Senior Center, the best place in the

1 world.

2 MS. ADEMCHEK: I will be talking for Elke:

3 "The senior center is my life. I had a very  
4 difficult past. I would not be here if it was not for  
5 the center. Isolation is not a fun word. Attending  
6 the senior center has made me enjoy being somewhere  
7 else and has made me also enjoy my home now. I  
8 understand people better and I enjoy being with  
9 others. I can stand here today and say it has made me  
10 appreciate my life more.

11 "We need to continue to provide services for  
12 the senior citizens that motivate them to interact  
13 with others and to provide social connection to the  
14 community. Just as this has assisted me with my own  
15 well-being, it will help other senior citizens in the  
16 future to continue."

17 Do you want to just say two words?

18 Okay. Just a quick note on the volunteer  
19 part. My husband is retired, and he speaks Polish and  
20 he is a baby-boomer. Recently we had a Meals on  
21 Wheels client that we could not get into the house.  
22 The caseworker couldn't get in the house because the  
23 caregiver kept hanging the phone up on us, and we had  
24 to get in there to get information for the family. So  
25 very quickly I said to my husband, Would you mind



1 program, Family Service League, that allows senior  
2 citizens to age in place safely. Our HomeShare  
3 program has been in existence eighteen months. I  
4 would love it if Family Service League could take  
5 credit for this program, but it is based and mimicked  
6 on a national model. Here we screen adults who are  
7 looking for affordable housing and senior citizens who  
8 are living alone.

9 Our housing counselors help each senior  
10 develop a personalized plan, acknowledging their  
11 financial needs and what household assistance they  
12 need at home. Counselors screen for perspective  
13 members and facilitate introductions of the two  
14 parties. Seniors and renters then agree on rent and  
15 services that the adults will provide. Examples of  
16 these services are shopping, cleaning, garbage removal  
17 and transportation.

18 Seniors greatly appreciate the  
19 companionship and the security of knowing that they  
20 are not completely alone.

21 Creative solutions as these, and so many  
22 others, as we've heard today, generated by the County  
23 and the Towns, need to be supported and continually  
24 expand. Some of the calls we get, we get sometimes  
25 thirty a day, but we encourage all of you here to

1 call. Our number for HomeShare is 647-3100, extension  
2 228.

3 As the number of senior citizens swell, we  
4 need to take time to adequately prepare for those that  
5 are coming forth. Family Service League and I  
6 personally appreciate this opportunity to communicate  
7 and handle these needs.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 LEGISLATOR STERN: And what a great program  
11 and important program and one we look forward to  
12 working with.

13 Mary Kennedy is up next. And Andrew Licari  
14 to follow.

15 Let me just point out that this morning's  
16 session was scheduled to go to 12:30. We are now at  
17 12:40. So we are going to continue on, and we're  
18 going to go until one o'clock. At which time, I'm  
19 told by our county clerk, that they're going to need  
20 either the room or other things for another event.  
21 But just so you know, we want to give everybody the  
22 opportunity on the east end to participate in the  
23 process, and that's why we did schedule an evening  
24 session for this evening beginning here at 5:30.

25 So we do have time constraints here, both

1           because of the location and because of our staff  
2           that's keeping up with us and doing a great job with  
3           us this morning and this afternoon.

4                        So we're going to go to one o'clock, at  
5           which time we need to break. And then we'll reconvene  
6           here later this afternoon.

7                        Miss Kennedy.

8                        MS. KENNEDY: Good afternoon, Legislator  
9           Steven Stern. I'm very, very happy that this task  
10          force has been put together. You're going to have a  
11          lot of broad shoulders, because a lot of politicians  
12          have made promises to the senior citizens for many  
13          years and nothing has happened.

14                       I advocate for senior citizens that I know  
15          out here in Port Jefferson. They needed one traffic  
16          light to go from 347. They have to come out of their  
17          apartments, drive down the road, and go across a main  
18          highway to get down to the other side. They've asked  
19          for a traffic light and they've gotten no help. And  
20          the reason I mention this right now is because one of  
21          my dearest friends, a resident there, with the stress  
22          of crossing over, waiting for the traffic, she blacked  
23          out in her car. Thank God she's okay.

24                       But I do think that in the future when  
25          senior citizen complexes are developed, they should

1 not be put out in the boondocks, they should be within  
2 a nice town setting, even if the town has to demolish  
3 some old nonusable buildings and make nice complexes  
4 near the parks, near the Town, near the village where  
5 they can walk in the evenings. It's not just for the  
6 very, very elitist people.

7 We senior citizens, and I'm a senior  
8 citizen, are like infancy in reverse, and we have to  
9 really try to keep up.

10 And the other thing I want to say about  
11 grandparents, and I'm glad you honor the importance of  
12 grandparents, there is a bill out there, the  
13 Grandparents Visiting Rights. I don't know how far  
14 it's gotten yet, but it is a very, very important  
15 bill. Not that grandparents have done anything wrong,  
16 it's just that some meanness or whatever happens in  
17 families, they are prevented from seeing their  
18 grandchildren. And I would like you to look into that  
19 bill and give it some support so that grandparents  
20 don't have to die not seeing part of their legacy and  
21 their heritage and so that they can see their  
22 grandchildren. Because grandchildren suffer also,  
23 because maybe a grandparent wants to leave them  
24 something for college and they're unable to do it or  
25 to help them.

1                   Now, getting back on my own case, I speak  
2                   wherever I can. I'm the person who's being prosecuted  
3                   by my Town because of very, very powerful people who  
4                   want my property. It's two acres. They've been  
5                   prosecuting me and tormenting me for ten years. This  
6                   is the Town of Huntington, by the way. And I may be  
7                   one of the people that Marie Rendaly discussed.

8                   I've been ridiculed, called crazy, called  
9                   names by people in the Town of Huntington. Some of  
10                  them are retired now. I've persisted and I haven't  
11                  given up. And when I could hardly stand, I still  
12                  stood my ground because it was my constitutional  
13                  right. And I'm very proud, because I became an  
14                  American citizen some years ago.

15                 These rights are very, very important to all  
16                 of us. Once we let it slip and some big powerful  
17                 person comes in and says, oh, this looks great -- They  
18                 wanted to build seven homes on my property. They did  
19                 every trick in the book, prosecuted me with a number  
20                 missing on a budget that they did deliberately. Took  
21                 me years to discover because I was afraid all the  
22                 time. I called Suffolk County. I got no help because  
23                 word got out who I was, eventually. I'm notorious  
24                 now. You'll find out. Mary Kennedy.

25                 I appealed. I won my appeal, thanks to this



1 They've labeled me a criminal.

2 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

3 (Applause)

4 LEGISLATOR STERN: Andrew Licari and Allen  
5 Krauss.

6 MR. LICARI: I'll have to say good  
7 afternoon. I thought I'd say good morning. It's good  
8 to see this crowd.

9 My name is Andrew Licari. I reside in  
10 Smithtown, Long Island. I'm here today to speak to  
11 you about the devastating property taxes senior  
12 citizens are forced to pay or are forced to leave Long  
13 Island for more affordable places.

14 New York State property taxes are the  
15 highest in the United States of America. Our property  
16 taxes have been skyrocketing for many years, mainly as  
17 a result of the school tax increases.

18 In the last ten years I have read in various  
19 newspapers about bills to reduce property taxes for  
20 senior citizens written by New York State senators and  
21 assemblymen. But, unfortunately, they never have been  
22 introduced or voted on by both the senate and the  
23 assembly. As a result, these tax relief bills have  
24 died and no senior tax relief has been approved.

25 Young families and retirees have been

1 forced to move to more affordable places. Young  
2 married families and retirees have moved to more  
3 affordable places many hundreds of miles away.  
4 Families have been destroyed. Family ties have been  
5 weakened and often broken. Children and grandparents  
6 most often become strangers to each other.

7 Many seniors feel that the state politicians  
8 they have voted for in the past have not been  
9 listening to their concerns and petitions. They are  
10 now questioning why do homeowners who have not had a  
11 family member in a school system for the last  
12 twenty-five years have to pay school taxes. It's not  
13 fair. Senior citizens are taxed for something and get  
14 absolutely nothing in return for their money.

15 My total property taxes in Smithtown are  
16 \$15,106, and my school taxes are \$8,626, which is 57  
17 percent, 57.1 percent of my property taxes. I haven't  
18 had a child attending a Smithtown school for the last  
19 nineteen years.

20 A Nassau County homeowner that I know pays  
21 \$6,900 in property taxes. Their school taxes are  
22 \$3,950, which is 55 percent of his total property  
23 taxes.

24 Senior citizens living on Long Island pay 55  
25 to 57 percent of their property taxes for school

1 systems they haven't had a child attending for the  
2 last twenty to twenty-five years. Again, I'll say  
3 it's not fair.

4 On an average of four thousand per year for  
5 school taxes, I have paid \$76,000 for something I  
6 actually got nothing in return for.

7 Every time a senior sells his home and moves  
8 off Long Island, the new owner of the property will  
9 have two to four children that will require schooling.

10 It takes a minimum of \$12,000 a year to  
11 educate a child in Smithtown. The new family adds  
12 twenty-four to forty eight thousand additional cost to  
13 the Smithtown School District. If a senior was able  
14 to stay in his Smithtown house he has been living in  
15 for the last thirty to forty years, the school  
16 district would have a significant cost avoidance.

17 My community has fifty homes in it. If only  
18 ten percent of the senior citizens in my community  
19 spend their retirement years in homes they raised  
20 their families in, the local school districts would  
21 have a hundred and twenty to two hundred forty  
22 thousand dollars cost avoidance. The cost avoidance,  
23 if you took all of Long Island, would be in the  
24 billions.

25 Three months ago, two friends and I formed

1 the Senior Citizens for Property Tax Relief  
2 Organization. We prepared a property tax relief  
3 petition which is demanding that a tax relief bill be  
4 written and introduced to the New York State Senate  
5 and Assembly. The new bill will provide a fifty  
6 percent school tax exception for senior citizens who  
7 are 65 years or older, has owned and resided in their  
8 primary house in New York State for thirty years. It  
9 doesn't matter what house you live in, as long as you  
10 live in New York State and have no child enrolled in a  
11 school system in the district. That the property is  
12 owned by husband and wife. The youngest owner must be  
13 at least 62 years of age. At age 70, the exempt  
14 individual school taxes will be frozen at a fifty  
15 percent rate, and at age 75 the individual will be  
16 eligible to receive a hundred percent school tax  
17 exemption. There will be no income level for this  
18 exemption. After approval by state government, no  
19 school system or district will be required to approve  
20 an individual school tax exemption.

21 LEGISLATOR STERN: Mr. Licari, I need you to  
22 wrap up.

23 MR. LICARI: I've been here since nine  
24 o'clock. Just give me a few more minutes.

25 LEGISLATOR STERN: There are still several

1 cards, and so many people would like the opportunity  
2 to speak. I have to tell you, I'm hanging on every  
3 word, which is all good stuff, but I do have to watch  
4 the time.

5 MR. LICARI: Then I'll give you a copy of  
6 this.

7 LEGISLATORE STERN: You can certainly wrap  
8 up. Please take a moment to wrap up.

9 MR. LICARI: Well, I've been with Senator  
10 Flanagan at his Town Hall meeting in Kings Park. He's  
11 agreed that he would put a bill together. And I'm  
12 going to meet with him on May 18th. But I feel that  
13 this task force was put here for a purpose, and it  
14 would be right if you guys get behind this kind of  
15 thinking and get to those senators and get them to do  
16 what's right for the people.

17 Together, this task force and our state  
18 representatives can make their mark in history by  
19 eliminating a tax burden on our seniors, who actually  
20 receive nothing in return for their money which is  
21 direly needed for quality of life items and medical  
22 necessities.

23 Thanks for your time.

24 (Applause)

25 MR. PRITZ: I would like to hear what

1 happens when you meet with Flanagan. Would you let us  
2 know?

3 MR. LICARI: You want my telephone number?

4 LEGISLATOR STERN: Next is Alan Krauss. And  
5 on deck is Margaret Lash.

6 MR. KRAUSS: My name is Alan Krauss. I'm  
7 chairman of the Shelter Island Senior Citizen Council.  
8 I'm going to take a personal minute, and you all are  
9 going to boo, and I'm sorry, but I disagree whole-  
10 heartedly with my predecessor. This is America. We  
11 believe in a public school system. And you should  
12 have been with me this past weekend on Shelter Island  
13 watching our school children perform a Broadway style  
14 production of Les Mis. I'll pay my taxes for the  
15 schools, thank you very much. I support my schools  
16 and I support my school tax. Okay.

17 So, first, thanks to Holly Teague and the  
18 Suffolk County Office for the Aging, especially for  
19 the residential repair program which has been a  
20 tremendous asset for us. Our residential repairs  
21 coordinator is a great guy, and he gets into homes  
22 where no one else is able to go, and alerts our  
23 coordinator of needs in that home. So thanks for the  
24 residential repair program.

25 And, two, yes, the pay for aides has to be

1           increased, and this is a legislated issue. You've got  
2           to get those wages up for those aides. Nobody is  
3           taking these jobs because they can make twenty-five  
4           dollars an hour cleaning homes instead of thirteen  
5           dollars an hour, or whatever, taking care of senior  
6           citizens.

7                         What I really came to say is I had a call  
8           from one of our seniors on Tuesday, and he talked to  
9           me for a few minutes, and what he said I thought was  
10          very important and it was brought up by the woman from  
11          the Legal Aid Society.

12                        He spoke of what I think I can call a  
13          culture of disregard by business for senior citizens,  
14          or anyone else for that matter. And his issue was  
15          that you used to have a relationship as a person with  
16          your local banker, your local finance person, your  
17          insurance person, et cetera, et cetera. Now here on  
18          Long Island the Bank of New York is now Chase  
19          Manhattan. The North Fork Bank will soon be Capital  
20          One.

21                        And there is no regard for whoever you are  
22          by big business. It's money, and that's the issue.  
23          And I think what Holly said earlier about credit card  
24          companies can do whatever they want and no one's  
25          governing those companies.

1                   So three things. The mortgage issue she  
2 raised, that's a very important issue. The credit  
3 card issue she raised, that's a very important issue.

4                   We get mail and calls from credit card  
5 companies day after day after day. And what is a  
6 senior supposed to say, Why are you calling me?  
7 I finally said to a gentleman yesterday, What's the  
8 issue? Oh, there's no problem with your card. I  
9 said, Then take my name off your call list. Well,  
10 that will take about six or eight weeks and you'll  
11 still get some calls.

12                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Start wrapping it up.

13                   MR. KRAUSS: Not-for-profit, charitable  
14 organizations, as much as I love them -- I had an 85  
15 year-old say to me, What am I to do with all of this  
16 mail? She wants to send everybody money. Somehow  
17 that's got to stop as well.

18                   You guys are doing a great job. We're glad  
19 to be here. Thank you. Keep going.

20                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

21                   Margaret Lash.

22                   On deck is Daphne Shuttleworth

23                   MS. LASH: Hello. My name is Margaret Lash,  
24 and I belong to Bridgehampton Senior Center. I  
25 started maybe about ten months ago and I enjoy it very

1 much. We have a lot of games there we can play, and  
2 we have special occasions we do.

3 I enjoy the people and we've become  
4 friends. I probably know everybody there. And it  
5 would be very good if we have a few more people over  
6 there, because it is a very nice place. And the  
7 chairman there, the one in charge is very nice. And I  
8 enjoy myself very much.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause)

11 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

12 Daphne Shuttleworth. And on deck is Sisco  
13 Bernard.

14 MS. SHUTTLEWORTH: Thank you for inviting  
15 Comfort Keepers to speak at this hearing. We provide  
16 nonmedical in-home care for the north and south forks  
17 of Long Island and are based in Riverhead.

18 Nothing is more important than helping  
19 people live full independent lives within the comfort  
20 of their own homes. Qualified homecare provides a  
21 dependable quality of life and relief from worries for  
22 seniors and should be available now and for the coming  
23 "age wave" in Suffolk County.

24 We agree that caring for people in their own  
25 homes is the most economic and healthy solution to

1 long-term health care. We want to help people "age in  
2 place" safely and comfortably.

3           Comfort Keepers' concerns mirror those of  
4 our clients. In addition to quality homecare  
5 services, our clients are seeking legal protections  
6 such as bonding, insurance, background checks and  
7 payroll tax collection. Several of our past and  
8 current clients have been harmed by homecare workers,  
9 not employed by agencies, who have preyed on the  
10 clients' weaknesses. In each instance there were no  
11 protections in place.

12           We believe that our elderly population needs  
13 to be protected, and this should be a primary focus of  
14 this task force.

15           Bringing care services to the home and  
16 connecting them to the existing social and medical  
17 networks is another focus area. This includes a  
18 myriad of social service concerns such as: Social work  
19 intervention for issues ranging from elder abuse to  
20 family dispute resolution to appropriate care  
21 planning. Medical advocacy. Financial and long-term  
22 planning. Safe and reliable transportation. Cultural  
23 enrichment programs.

24           In order to meet these service concerns,  
25 those providing senior care, such as Comfort Keepers,

1 will have to join together with Suffolk County in a  
2 concerted effort. Funding for these services is an  
3 obvious necessity, especially for the large population  
4 of senior citizens who live with financial constraints  
5 but have not qualified for Medicaid. Care provider  
6 agencies will require assistance as the need for more  
7 caregivers increases and the pool of eligible  
8 employees decreases.

9 Extensive support services and advocates for  
10 senior citizens and their families must be readily  
11 available. In addition, programs to educate and  
12 medical community, various service providers and the  
13 general public as to issues facing our seniors should  
14 be offered regularly throughout the county.

15 Our senior citizens are very valuable. We  
16 should protect them and treat them with the dignity  
17 and the respect they deserve.

18 Thank you for these opportunities.

19 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you, Daphne. I'm  
20 sure that several of us, like myself, would have many  
21 questions for you. In the interests of time, though,  
22 I'd like to continue hearing from so many in the  
23 crowd. But I hope that you can make yourself  
24 available to us in the future if we have additional  
25 questions.

1 MS. SHUTTLEWORTH: Keep in touch. And I can  
2 give you a business card.

3 LEGISLATOR STERN: I am looking forward to  
4 more complete conversation with you as we go forward.

5 MS. SHUTTLEWORTH: Thank you very much.

6 I have a copy of my statement I can leave  
7 with you also.

8 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

9 Sisco Barnard. And Areirtos Michalos on  
10 deck.

11 MR. BARNARD: I'm Sisco Barnard. My wife  
12 did not come with me to speak, so when I come I want  
13 to write down what I have to say. So that's all I  
14 have to say today.

15 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for being here.

16 (Applause)

17 LEGISLATOR STERN: Michalos?

18 Rosemarie Normoyle. And on deck is Sandy  
19 Sanjet.

20 MS. NORMOYLE: Good afternoon. I live in  
21 Hampton Bays. I would like to discuss with you today  
22 affordable housing for senior citizens. I was married  
23 to my husband forty-three years, thirty-three of those  
24 years spent living in our own home with our three  
25 children.

1                   Fast-forward to ten years ago. My husband  
2                   developed cancer, and after three and-a-half years of  
3                   a heroic battle with cancer he died. Here I am, all  
4                   alone. I was determined to keep my home, but after  
5                   six years of struggling it was an impossible dream.

6                   After years of being in the "we" mentality I  
7                   had to readjust and become "me" mentality. Where  
8                   could I go to live for the rest of my life? At first  
9                   I considered going south but could not convince myself  
10                  to leave this beautiful area. After much research, I  
11                  moved out of my beloved home and into HUD housing with  
12                  Catholic Charities umbrella.

13                  How fortunate I am to have known about this  
14                  housing opportunity. My apartment is cozy and sunny  
15                  and close to walking distance to town and also close  
16                  to the senior center.

17                  We are in dire need of much more affordable  
18                  housing for senior citizens like I have described. I  
19                  hope you can help accomplish this need, just being  
20                  close to town and close to all the facilities. I  
21                  drive right now, but I'm looking at the fact that I  
22                  will not be able to drive eventually.

23                  Kudos to Pam Giacoia who runs the senior  
24                  center in Hampton Bays. She is a treasure.

25                  Thank you all.

1 (Applause)

2 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

3 Sandy Sanjette (phonetic). And Adelaide  
4 Czerwonka is on deck.

5 MR. SANJETTE: Good morning. Actually, I'm  
6 with the Riverhead Energy Committee, which just  
7 started a short time ago. We're talking about  
8 problems with energy that people don't know anything  
9 about. Very appropriate today, because gasoline they  
10 say is going to four dollars a gallon. I say it may  
11 go to five dollars a gallon. That's one of the  
12 changes I can talk to you separately about, because  
13 it's a long and involved thing.

14 Next thing is mobile homes. They're now  
15 selling some mobile homes for \$350,000, not fifty and  
16 sixty thousand. So that's one of the problems we have  
17 to address in the future.

18 Basically the big thing I want to talk about  
19 really is energy. And people don't understand a lot  
20 of things about it, and I don't have enough time in  
21 two minutes to tell you all the problems connected  
22 with it. But I do hope to get to see you and talk to  
23 you about all the other problems with it.

24 Thank you.

25 (Applause)

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

2                   Adelaide Czerwonka. And Herbert McKay is  
3                   on deck.

4                   MS. CZERWONKA: I live in East Quogue, and I  
5                   live in a senior mobile home park, which is now not a  
6                   senior mobile home park, it is for families, and there  
7                   is a great deal of harassment going on.

8                   Pam Giacoia has had to help me once or  
9                   twice, but it doesn't do any good because the new  
10                  management is in Stamford, Connecticut. The whole  
11                  purpose of it is money. And, of course, lawyers are  
12                  not available, as the lady said.

13                 I had an accident where I was shoved off the  
14                 road by a car and crashed. She had to go with me to  
15                 court because I was asking the manager to keep the  
16                 MS13's from in front of my house. It goes on and on.  
17                 I have the same thing with the new manager.

18                 And I have addressed the issue to the Town  
19                 of Southampton. They do nothing. They go back to Pam  
20                 Giacoia, which is ridiculous. President Schummer --

21                 LEGISLATOR STERN: Quite a promotion for the  
22                 senator.

23                 MS. CZERWONKA: He doesn't want to be  
24                 senator. But going to the meetings for SAD, you kind  
25                 of see what he's been doing. It may be a slur to some

1 people, but he's actually doing his homework. It  
2 comes out right.

3 Of course, if we're at war we shouldn't be  
4 sitting here. The price freeze would be on money and  
5 everything, on gas. We wouldn't have to pay that  
6 money. During World War II there was a freeze on  
7 money so we wouldn't have these issues. We'd have  
8 them, yeah, helped, of course, by new kind of funding  
9 for senior citizens, et cetera.

10 But there are so many issues. And my  
11 concern is how do I get money now for gas? How do I  
12 get money for my propane? It's gone from 69 cents in  
13 '82 to five dollars. Plus we have to pay an  
14 environmental charge each time. Now, this comes four  
15 times a year. They send it four times because it'll  
16 be a smaller payment. And my income from my Social  
17 Security does not cover it.

18 You go to food stamps. Food stamps, they  
19 print your fingers, they take a mugshot, they want to  
20 know everything. Then they take and cut your food  
21 stamps, after they agree to an amount, because you got  
22 an increase in social security.

23 I can go on.

24 LEGISLATOR STERN: I need you to wrap it up.

25 MS. CZERWONKA: What are you supposed to do?

1                   So that's it. But everything they said here  
2                   is accurate. The harassment. When you're an old  
3                   lady. And, you know, I want to move. I went there  
4                   for one purpose, for fifty-five and older, for  
5                   respect. I wanted to go to work. I could go to work.

6                   Just like they said in the paper, I still  
7                   want to be a productive person despite the fact that  
8                   I'm past 70. I'm going to be 75. I still feel I have  
9                   to do what I have to do. I can't get my life  
10                  straightened out. Period.

11                  Thank you.

12                  LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for being here  
13                  today.

14                  (Applause)

15                  LEGISLATOR STERN: All I know is that as I  
16                  move on in my later years and I need assistance, I'm  
17                  going wherever Pam is.

18                  MR. MCKAY: You called me. My name is  
19                  Herbert McKay. I come here at a great sacrifice, not  
20                  to myself but for my wife. My wife had a stroke  
21                  fifteen years ago. I had to get somebody in to stay  
22                  with her. I live in Montauk. I had to come all the  
23                  way over here from Montauk.

24                  I put my card in, but my card got shuffled.  
25                  I don't know why. People who arrived after me got up.

1 I sat here very patiently. I listened. I understand  
2 there's problems.

3 Let me just bring out one problem, real  
4 estate taxes. The school taxes are predicated upon  
5 the people that own homes. They're the ones that pay  
6 the bucks. They pay all the real estate taxes. My  
7 taxes in Montauk have gone crazy. The real estate  
8 taxes have gone absolutely insane.

9 I belong to an organization, in fact, I'm  
10 now the chairman of it, it's Suffolk County Committe  
11 for Legal Immigration. This thing impacts on  
12 everything. It's impacting on your schools. The  
13 school taxes are going on because they're providing  
14 more services.

15 Now, don't give me a line that a lot of  
16 people give me, that, well, there are six people  
17 living in this house. That person that owns the house  
18 is paying the same real estate taxes I'm paying. He's  
19 got six people living in there. He's got a bigger  
20 income. They are not paying their proportionate share  
21 of the school tax. Something has to be done about  
22 that. Something must be done about it.

23 Now, I'm talking about illegal immigrants.  
24 I'm for legal immigrants. My parents came here. And  
25 I understand the problem that's there. Social

1 Security is now going to be impacted if they ever go  
2 ahead with this whacky idea of let's give everyone  
3 amnesty. They tried it years ago. It didn't work  
4 years ago, the problem got worse. It is now twenty  
5 million people.

6 The people that are productively working  
7 here, that's another fallacy that's out there. I have  
8 seven children, fifteen grandchildren. I am trying to  
9 get employment for my grandchildren out there. I want  
10 them to do what my sons and my daughters did. They  
11 cut grass and worked on the fishing boats. They did  
12 all sorts of work. They can't get those jobs because  
13 those jobs are held by illegal immigrants.

14 It's also the problem of the people that are  
15 hiring these people. They don't give these people  
16 medical benefits. They don't pay into insurance  
17 programs. And there's impact on other things.  
18 Hospital care. You see what's happening. Southampton  
19 Hospital, which was a great facility fifteen years  
20 ago, last year they lost forty million dollars  
21 because people didn't pay, didn't have the resources  
22 to pay. I had to pay.

23 I got a bill for my wife. She was there  
24 five days. I got a bill. Luckily, I have insurance.  
25 Luckily. The bill was \$15,000. My portion of the

1 bill is like \$2,600. I'm happy and delighted that I  
2 can afford to pay that. I would rather not. I would  
3 rather do like what the other people did that walked  
4 in before me. All they did was say take care of this,  
5 take care of that, and it's done.

6 I'm a veteran. I was in Korea 1952 to 1954.  
7 I spent my twentieth birthday there. Now I see the  
8 results of depleting the manpower of a country. I see  
9 the results of it.

10 As a veteran, the first world war, second  
11 world war, Iraq, Vietnam, everybody got a bonus. You  
12 know who didn't get a bonus? Take a look at it. It's  
13 Korean War veterans. You know why? They called it a  
14 police action. I didn't fight in a war, I fought in a  
15 police action. In two years 56,000 men died, and that  
16 was in two years. When you had the Vietnam war it was  
17 twelve years, you had 58,000 that died.

18 I'm not trying to say a life isn't worth  
19 something. That was a cruel war we fought. It was  
20 terrible. I got caught in the Incon (phonetic)  
21 reservoir. If it wasn't for the First Marine Division  
22 I would be frozen in the ice.

23 Who cares if I'm a veteran? They don't  
24 care. There's a lack of people willing to listen.  
25 You're listening to me. But we have got a lot of

1 things we've got to do in this country.

2 Now, another thing I spoke about is Social  
3 Security. We have got this big dream about Social  
4 Security. My children and certainly my grandchildren  
5 will never be able to collect it. You know why? All  
6 my legislator gives me is, "It's in a locked box."  
7 What good is a locked box if everybody has the key?  
8 They're spending money that I put into it. It's  
9 crazy. It's absolutely ridiculous. And you want to  
10 go to lunch.

11 LEGISLATOR STERN: We're well past lunch.  
12 It's 1:20. But I hope you and everybody appreciate  
13 certainly our staff, that we are now forty-five  
14 minutes after the original time, but I hope that shows  
15 that we're willing to stay. We are willing to keep  
16 our doors open because it is important to hear from  
17 everybody here who wants to speak.

18 MR. MCKAY: I just have a closing remark.

19 The organization I head up now, the Suffolk  
20 County Committee for Legal Immigration, sixty percent  
21 of the people that come to me are senior citizens.  
22 I'm talking about over 65, not 55. What are they  
23 going to do? They can't get second jobs. And I got  
24 people 75. I know I'm 75. I know I don't look my  
25 age.

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN:  Pretty good.

2                   MR. MCKAY:  My wife took care of me.  Now  
3                   it's my turn to take care of my wife, and I'm doing  
4                   it, and I'm not complaining about it.  This is what  
5                   marriage is all about.  It's about taking care of each  
6                   other.  You have to take care of each other, not walk  
7                   out the door.  I don't believe in that.

8                   Fortunately, if we both live until the 15th  
9                   of next year, we'll be married fifty years.  I'm  
10                  blessed.  I would like to see everybody reach the same  
11                  goal that I have.

12                  But I'd like to thank you for taking the  
13                  time.  And at least now I know I can go back.  I had  
14                  my six minutes.

15                  (Applause)

16                  LEGISLATOR STERN:  Jean Delorum?

17                  Howard Jute?

18                  Nancy Jansen?

19                  Denise Fellow?

20                  Mary Sadowski?

21                  MS. SADOWSKI:  Here.

22                  LEGISLATOR STERN:  And Julia Gazer on deck.

23                  MS. SADOWSKI:  Hello, everyone.  My name is  
24                  Mary Sadowski.  I'm a licensed social worker.  I work  
25                  for the Town of Southampton Senior Services and I do

1 in-home assessments for those who receive Meals on  
2 Wheels.

3 I am here on behalf of those people who  
4 aren't specifically the people who receive Meals on  
5 Wheels, but those who by reason of functional status  
6 cannot leave their home anymore and also have some  
7 mental health issues, primarily depression.

8 There is a lack of services for those  
9 in-home seniors who have mental health issues. There  
10 are some services that they can go out for, but there  
11 is really not too many services that go in the home.

12 Especially out on the east end, the  
13 isolation which they have contributes to depression.  
14 Depression contributes to chronic illness, which  
15 increases health costs. So it behooves us as a  
16 society to implement some form of in-home mental  
17 health services to prevent this.

18 Primarily, what would be very helpful would  
19 be some wellness counseling in the homes, some  
20 education, a lot of education I think primarily for  
21 mental health issues and depression, specifically for  
22 what it is and what can be done for it, some of the  
23 treatments, and really just educating people, because  
24 I think a lot of people don't even know what it  
25 involves or what can be done about it and that they

1 can feel better.

2 There's a lot of senior citizens out there  
3 who are home and are in pain, emotional pain, and it's  
4 not necessary.

5 So I think preventive measures should be in  
6 place to hopefully decrease the symptoms of the  
7 depression, thereby decreasing this chronic illness in  
8 senior citizens, thereby decreasing health costs, and  
9 at the same time improving the quality of life.

10 Thank you.

11 (Applause)

12 LEGISLATOR STERN: Bellamy Brook?

13 Catherine Metula?

14 Jim Gallagher?

15 MR. GALLAGHER: I knew if I stayed long  
16 enough --

17 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for your  
18 patience.

19 MR. GALLAGHER: Well, I guess you know who I  
20 am, Jim Gallagher, Seniors Against Discrimination.  
21 I'm the guy that Bob mentioned earlier. Bob Kern and  
22 I had a meeting with Senator LaValle and we spoke  
23 about the age tax cap Bill S3533. For the benefit of  
24 anyone unfamiliar with it, it seeks to place a cap on  
25 school taxes for Star eligible senior citizens at age

1           70. That is, the senior will continue to pay the tax  
2           rate at age 70 but won't have to worry about any  
3           further school tax increases.

4                         We were told at that meeting by the sponsor  
5           of the bill, Senator LaValle, they would keep it  
6           moving toward a favorable result but the assembly was  
7           holding things up. We asked him to move his bill out  
8           of the Aging Committee, and last Monday, April 23rd,  
9           it was moved to the Senate Finance Committee.

10                        Yesterday I called Assemblyman Engelbert's  
11           office about moving his Bill A1894 out of the Real  
12           Property Tax Committee that's been there since  
13           January. I was told that a written request has been  
14           made and it's waiting a reply from the chair. The  
15           aide who answered took my number and promised to call  
16           me if there's anything new to report. Well, that was  
17           yesterday, so I'll give it a few days. They're not in  
18           session, I believe, until next Monday.

19                        This makes me wonder, was this gonna happen  
20           anyway, or was it our prodding of the senate that  
21           caused a sudden flurry of activity in both houses?

22                        Moving bills out of committee seems to be an  
23           ongoing problem with the age 70 bill. We've been  
24           following it through since 2004 under a bill number,  
25           then through 2005 and 2006 under still other bill

1 numbers. All they wound up with was dying in  
2 committee. I should have said "expired" in deference  
3 to that gentleman before.

4 But listen to this. A while back I called a  
5 local politician's office to ask -- I won't mention  
6 names, but I asked how do you get a bill out of  
7 committee. Are you ready for this? "It's very  
8 tricky." Then somebody else got on the phone and said  
9 that particular rep is a co-sponsor so he could do it.  
10 I suspect there are other games played in Albany that  
11 we all pay for.

12 Okay. I skipped something very important.  
13 Only very recently did I learn that the prime sponsor  
14 must make a written request to have the bills moved  
15 out of committee. Otherwise, it doesn't move.  
16 Apparently, this wasn't done by the sponsor or was  
17 done but rejected by the chair in previous years.

18 We didn't know a written request was  
19 necessary so we didn't ask the sponsor to do so.  
20 Anybody know that a written request is necessary? I  
21 guess not. We didn't know.

22 Another thing most people don't know about  
23 Albany, I didn't know, I found out by digging, a bill  
24 must have the same bill sponsored by a majority member  
25 of each house; that is, both houses must each have a

1 bill with identical text.

2 If a minority member of either house  
3 proposes legislation, there is little likelihood of it  
4 going anywhere, it's likely to be a one-house bill and  
5 will not go anywhere. Did anybody know that? One  
6 person. And I found out, too. Needless to say, I  
7 didn't know that. But I suspect there are other games  
8 played in Albany that we all pay for but have no idea  
9 of the hidden rules, just like I described, rules that  
10 are not explained unless we know the right questions  
11 to ask, and most of us don't, and I think Albany is  
12 very happy about that. And even when we ask, we're at  
13 the risk of getting goofy answers.

14 What we need on this task force is somebody  
15 with an Albany background that knows how these Albany  
16 games are played. We're all familiar with the blame  
17 game when we question what's wrong. It's always  
18 somebody else's fault. We need someone who can cut  
19 through the rhetoric and put the facts forth so we can  
20 work it. We need somebody for the senior citizens to  
21 help this bill to turn into state law.

22 There are two men that come to mind, Tom  
23 Barraga and Steve Levy. Tom has several desk aides  
24 and I'm sure can teach us the rules and let us know  
25 whether we're being sandbagged or misled, and if the

1           answers we're given are complete or even partial.  
2           Everyone knows Tom Barraga and Steve Levy, and I'm  
3           sure they can help us. We need somebody with that  
4           kind of experience. Call it a consultant, somebody  
5           who can help evaluate what we've been told and get  
6           involved in helping us.

7                         Mr. Stern, I think one very important thing  
8           this tax force can do is to get someone to help us  
9           learn how to play the Albany games effectively, teach  
10          us how to win these games. Somebody has to win and it  
11          might as well be us senior citizens. Albany has been  
12          winning these games too long because we don't know the  
13          rules. And that's part of the reason why we find  
14          ourselves in the pickle we're in today. Why not ask  
15          Tom Barraga or Steve Levy?

16                        I'm wrapping it up.

17                        Perhaps you know someone we need to know to  
18          knows how to play these games for the rest of the  
19          senior citizens.

20                        Stay in touch with your state senators and  
21          assembly members regarding the age 70 tax cap.

22                        Thank you.

23                        LEGISLATOR STERN: James Bodie?

24                        Richard Nogan?

25                        MR. NOGAN: Thank you.

1                   My name is Richard Nogan. I'm 78, and I am  
2 a war veteran. And I really have no complaints about  
3 the county and what they've done for me, which is very  
4 good.

5                   But there is one thing bugging me that kept  
6 bugging me. I read your ad in the paper, and I said  
7 I've got to go there and let a little steam off. It's  
8 about when you go down for oil or electricity, heating  
9 oil or electricity, you have to be there early. If  
10 you're not there early, no matter what kind of weather  
11 it is, you've got to stand outside. And you'll  
12 freeze. And I stood outside over there with children  
13 there, with people in wheelchairs, with canes.

14                   And even myself, I have cancer of the  
15 pancreas. I got half my pancreas cut out, which gave  
16 me a lot of sugar. And I go, through the courtesy of  
17 Medicare, I go once a week to treatment for chemo.  
18 Plus, I had a triple bypass and I had a ball joint  
19 operation. And I still take chemo every day.

20                   And I went down there during the winter  
21 months to apply for electricity so it wouldn't be shut  
22 off. So I waited outside. Naturally, I got in and  
23 waited on line. And the officer says, "Well, we have  
24 a quota, we don't know if they'll take you." I said,  
25 "All right." I stood in line. Two hours I stood in

1 line, plus the freezing outside. When I got to the  
2 window they said, "Wait here a minute." And I took  
3 the papers and everything. And he comes back and  
4 says, "We can't accept you." Their quota was full.  
5 And here they were gonna turn my electricity off the  
6 next day. Luckily, I have my children who were able  
7 to pay the electric bill. But that's what I'm  
8 complaining about. You've got to stand outside.

9 Why can't they have a system where people  
10 could be inside, not freeze, with their children, with  
11 cripples in wheelchairs and canes, old people like  
12 myself. I'm 78. And my sickness, you know, it breaks  
13 down on me. And it's not that easy for me to do these  
14 things.

15 They will give you one voucher for oil and  
16 electricity. I didn't know that. But they'll give  
17 you one voucher for oil. They'll send you a voucher  
18 for one fillup. It will be \$475, which will give you  
19 about 200 gallons and that's it. Then you've got to  
20 go down to Riverhead for oil. And that's a very  
21 strenuous thing for all of us senior citizens, people  
22 that are sick like myself.

23 So it was bugging me and bugging me and I  
24 just had to tell you about it and get it out of my  
25 system.

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you. I'm so glad  
2                   you did. And it's something that so many of us  
3                   working at so many levels are, unfortunately, all too  
4                   familiar with. But I appreciate all of your comments.  
5                   And that is certainly something that this task force  
6                   will take note of as we go into our deliberations,  
7                   because the current system is unacceptable.

8                   MR. NOGAN: What is it to let forty people  
9                   in? And they have a quota of twenty people that  
10                  they'll accept. You know, if they can get the people  
11                  in there, not to freeze. We got a bad winter.

12                  Thank you.

13                  (Applause)

14                  LEGISLATOR STERN: Kathleen Phillips?

15                  Nigel Bruce?

16                  MR. BRUCE: I'll be very brief.

17                  Good afternoon, everyone, Legislator Steven  
18                  Stern and his colleagues, my fellow senior citizens,  
19                  friends. Thank you for a day well-spent. I'm very,  
20                  very glad I came.

21                  To introduce myself, I'm Nigel Bruce. And  
22                  it was very interesting, very informative, and there  
23                  are things that I've learned and should know. Thank  
24                  you very much for your time and your input.

25                  (Applause)

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you for being here  
2 today.

3                   Ms. Mott?

4                   MS. MOTT: Sandra Lee Mott. Good afternoon.  
5 My name is Sandra Lee Mott. I live in Riverhead.  
6 Again, I want to thank you all for having this task  
7 force set up.

8                   I, too, learned quite a bit. I also learned  
9 that a lot of people don't know a lot of things that  
10 they should because there's an awful lot of brochures  
11 and programs out there that people are not being made  
12 aware of. I'm going to talk to you about two of them  
13 which we found out about.

14                   First of all, my background is in housing  
15 and Social Services. I have a master's in urban  
16 affairs, specializing in housing and Social Services  
17 from Boston University.

18                   I worked almost twenty years, if not more,  
19 specifically in client one-on-one relationships and  
20 Section 8 rent subsidy and elderly housing. I also  
21 worked as an analyst writer for the State of New York.

22                   Just so you know who you're talking to here,  
23 since I'm not affiliated with any group or  
24 organization, I am here as a private citizen, as well  
25 as representing my mother, who is 81, and my father

1           who is deceased as of April 4, 2006, Arnold J. Mott,  
2           who is at Calverton National Cemetery.

3                       The gist of the story is that I had a brain  
4           tumor, diagnosed almost five years ago. A lot of  
5           these people are telling you a lot of these  
6           circumstances. I'm not here for my circumstances. I  
7           want you to know that I survived the system. Having  
8           worked in it for as long as I did, I had to get  
9           Congressman Timothy Bishop in to assist me.

10                      I had to sue the federal government for my  
11           disability benefits with two private attorneys. And  
12           it took almost four and-a-half years to finally get  
13           the first check. I'm still fighting for my food  
14           stamps because they're not accepting the information  
15           that the federal government accepted. But that's not  
16           really why I'm here.

17                      I'm letting you know that this goes beyond  
18           what age you are. This covers everybody in this  
19           country, in this county, everybody in this state.

20                      We have an issue with the Department of  
21           Motor Vehicles which people need to be made aware of.  
22           We are made aware by reading an article in the AARP  
23           magazine or newsletter, I forget which, you know, that  
24           if an individual dies you have to be extremely careful  
25           what kind of identity theft may be taken against that

1 person.

2 Since we had done all the other things, we  
3 didn't even consider turning in my father's driver's  
4 license. We didn't even think of it, because my  
5 mother had turned in the title, changed it to her  
6 name. No one told us we needed to turn in my father's  
7 license in order to protect him from identity theft.  
8 Unbeknownst to us, you also get a refund.

9 So for all these people, whether it's a  
10 penny or nickel, they should go after it. If you have  
11 a license that is still in existence more than four  
12 years after the passing of your loved one, because,  
13 technically it is the law of the State of New York  
14 that you must surrender this license, is how they  
15 phrase it, you are entitled to a twenty-dollar refund.

16 Now, if it's twenty dollars to get you here  
17 today, individual or not, or to pay a grocery bill,  
18 it's still your money. No one tells you that at the  
19 Department of Motor Vehicles. Because, as the  
20 gentleman previously said, you have to know what to  
21 ask. Well, if you haven't been through it before, you  
22 don't know what to ask.

23 The other circumstance is insurance over-  
24 payments. My parents belong to Blue Cross/Blue  
25 Shield, the original medical program, not the HMO. Do

1           you know that they charge overpayments? We found this  
2           out.

3                       We're a very organized family, but we  
4           finally put the information together, and we found out  
5           that overpayments had been paid periodically. You are  
6           being charged overpayments so that, quote, unquote,  
7           the insurance company can make a specific amount of  
8           profit, is what I was told on the television.  
9           Overpayments.

10                      People are dropping out of insurance  
11           programs because they can't pay the premiums, and the  
12           insurance company is able to charge you overpayments.  
13           Now, we know that because we've been paid back  
14           previously.

15                      I have a whole collection of letters that I  
16           sent to the insurance commissioner, which went from  
17           one unit to another unit, the typical routine. Who is  
18           going to investigate it? I want you to investigate  
19           it, because it's fraud.

20                      They're charging people more than they  
21           should be required to be charged so that the insurance  
22           companies can make a certain percentage of profit.  
23           And the State of New York approves it. Coupled with  
24           if you don't live long enough when they decide that  
25           that percentage has been averaged, you don't get back

1 the overpayment. You can live long enough to pay it.  
2 But if you die prior, you don't get it back?

3 I never heard of such a thing. We never  
4 heard of such a thing until we put our little pieces  
5 together. No one we've talked to has ever heard of  
6 such a thing.

7 I want an investigation through whatever  
8 consumer fraud agencies you have with the county, the  
9 country, which I know there's Consumer Affairs, on  
10 behalf of every citizen in Suffolk County who has been  
11 overcharged. It's not a refund upon death for the  
12 payment, it's an overpayment and that's how it's  
13 referred to.

14 The third issue and most crucial --

15 MR. STERN: I need you to wrap it up.

16 MS. MOTT: -- is I want an investigation of  
17 Brookhaven Memorial Hospital. They misrepresent their  
18 care. It is notorious for its lack of care, its lack  
19 of properly licensed people.

20 My father did not die at Brookhaven Memorial  
21 Hospital, he was killed at Brookhaven Memorial  
22 Hospital. And I can tell you as a fact. Even  
23 visiting him at the gravesite at Calverton --

24 I want the District Attorney, through the  
25 Suffolk County offices and auspices, to investigate

1           what's going on. Because I can't get any kind of  
2           mortality rates, I can't get any statistics on that  
3           hospital's dying. Okay?

4                        I want the New York State Attorney General  
5           to investigate, in conjunction with the District  
6           Attorney. And I want the Department of Justice to  
7           investigate. Because, frankly, they are killing  
8           people there, taking them through that heart trauma  
9           center.

10                      My father had a walking, silent heart  
11           attack. Three days in the emergency room. So is that  
12           all? He should have been there four or five days,  
13           usually. And the bottom line is the whole thing, if  
14           you don't investigate it, you're constituents are  
15           dying on a daily basis there.

16                      And the long and the short of it, I will be  
17           happy to provide the one-year length of time it took  
18           to get his medical reports. There were so many  
19           inconsistencies. Had Mark Alessi not helped us, we  
20           would never have gotten it. He had to go to the  
21           commissioners.

22                      People are not dying, they're being killed  
23           at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital. You've got this  
24           Burger King commission running around saying there's  
25           going to be a determination whether they're going to

1 get more hospitals or not.

2 The bottom line is help me, please. I beg  
3 you to find out the information about my father being  
4 killed at that hospital. I need a name before I leave  
5 here today as to who I can contact.

6 Mr. Stern, can you direct me as to what  
7 legislator oversees the health commissioner, however  
8 that is phrased? It's impossible to get data.

9 LEGISLATOR STERN: We'll speak after.

10 MS. MOTT: Thank you.

11 And God bless Mr. Tim Bishop and Mark Alessi  
12 and their staff, because if you need an answer he'll  
13 find it. They won't slough you off.

14 LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

15 Bridgette Castellano?

16 MS. CASTELLANO: Good afternoon. I don't  
17 have any notes. Just very briefly, I'm the second  
18 director of the National Committee of Grandparents for  
19 Children's Rights. I noticed there were some people  
20 who came in and asked about grandparent issues.

21 At the School of Social Welfare, through a  
22 grant from legislatures and grant from State of New  
23 York, families are able to fly interest-free, and  
24 other services to grandparent caregivers on Long  
25 Island, specifically Suffolk County where there are

1           29,000 grandparents raising grandchildren. Each one  
2           of them thinks they're the only ones doing this.  
3           Well, they're not. We're there.

4                         We can provide free legal help, free  
5           one-time expenses. If a grandparent comes and needs a  
6           bed, we provide this for them. Free legal counseling.  
7           Respite care. Numerous services that are available  
8           for grandparents.

9                         I just want to say there are 29,000  
10          grandparents raising children in Suffolk County. Next  
11          to New York City, that is the highest concentration of  
12          grandparent caregivers in New York. So that's quite a  
13          lot. So it's appropriate to get the word out that we  
14          do exist.

15                        Nationwide there are 550,000 children in  
16          foster care and six million in the care of  
17          grandparents. People don't know that. I'm sure you  
18          know one or are one.

19                        We're having the first international  
20          grandparent summit in Brooklyn May 6th to 7th. This  
21          phenomena of grandparents raising kids is growing not  
22          just in the United States but throughout the world,  
23          different nations. Our keynote speaker is singer  
24          Patti Page, who is also raising her two grand-  
25          children.

1                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Thank you.

2                   I have no other cards. Is there anybody  
3 else here with us this afternoon who would like to  
4 address the task force?

5                   VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE: Did you call  
6 Martha Table (phonetic)?

7                   LEGISLATOR STERN: Yes.

8                   VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE: She had to leave  
9 and she left a small statement with me to read.

10                  LEGISLATOR STERN: We'll have it admitted  
11 into the record.

12                  Anybody else?

13                  Seeing none, then we'll close the public  
14 portion. Let me say that, after going well over our  
15 time, what wonderful information and stories we got to  
16 hear from so many professionals, but particularly from  
17 so many senior citizens living within the community.

18                  Let me say to all the members of the task  
19 force, as you can see, everybody sat, everybody  
20 listened, even though we went well over our allotted  
21 time. And I thank you, because it certainly shows the  
22 commitment of every single person on this task force.  
23 And so I thank you for your attention and patience and  
24 look forward to seeing everybody back here at 5:30.

25                  (Time noted: 2:47 p.m.)

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Certification

I, Constance Monett, a shorthand reporter and  
Notary Public in and for the State of New York, do  
hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing is a true and accurate  
transcript of my stenographic notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my  
hand this day of May 22, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_

Constance J. Monett

