

# **VETERANS & SENIORS COMMITTEE**

## **OF THE**

# **SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

## **Minutes**

A regular meeting of the Veterans & Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on August 17, 2006.

### **Members Present:**

Legislator Steven H. Stern, Chairman  
Legislator Jack Eddington, Vice•Chair  
Legislator Cameron Alden  
Legislator John M. Kennedy, Jr.  
Legislator Elie Mystal

### **Also In Attendance:**

Richard K. Baker, Deputy Clerk  
Verna Donnan, Budget Review Office  
Deborah Harris, Aide to Legislator Stern  
Holly Rhodes•Teague, Director/Office for the Aging  
Tom Ronayne, Director of Veterans Service Agency  
Ellen Eichelbaum  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken By:**  
Diana Kraus • Court Stenographer

**(THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 9:29 AM)**

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

We will come to order. Committee on the Veterans and Seniors. We will come to order; and everybody please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Alden.

**(SALUTATION)**

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I'll ask everyone to remain standing as we observe a moment of silence and remember our very brave men and women fighting for our freedoms around the world.

**(MOMENT OF SILENCE)**

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you. It's that time of year, so the Directors of the Office

of the Aging and Veterans Services are both away on vacation so we have a light agenda today. But I wanted to take this opportunity to invite a very special guest, who's joining our committee today who's going to provide us with some pretty good insight, some good suggestions, and good ideas I think that we can all take with us as we go back out into our districts and continue to have important meetings with seniors and those who work with the senior community. So it's my pleasure to welcome today to the committee, Ellen Eichelbaum. Ellen, why don't you come on up and take a seat at the table?

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Where would you like me to sit?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

First of all, good morning. I'm going to leave it to you to introduce yourself and tell everybody ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

No, why don't you do that? You do such a good job.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

•• a little bit about who you are and what you do, some background.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Good morning. My name is Ellen Eichelbaum. I'm a corporate gerontologist. I know you're all saying, okay what is that? So that's good that at least you have questions. And I've been working as a corporate gerontologist for longer than I can probably remember. I work directly with corporations, companies, organizations on •• who deal directly with seniors, whether it's financial services or banks, credit unions, any institution that deals with seniors directly on how to develop trust in ethics. I'm very big on the trust in ethics issue. I was on the National Trust and Ethics Committee for the Insurance Board. Taking advantage of seniors is a very sore spot with me. In talking to seniors obviously you know that's a real sore spot with them.

So I'm usually a key note speaker for annual events. I talk mostly to the top sales people in these companies; and managers, directors, ceo's, and president's of companies on how to institute programs to •• within their companies to develop trust in ethics with aging population. And I love doing that. Although everyone says why did you pick the worst career in the world, speaking in front of a group? But, Steven, you can relate to that.

So obviously in doing this I've learned a lot. I've not only learned a lot from speaking to these organizations, I worked four years with State Farm on a new program that they're instituting in 2007 on communicating to seniors. There a •• there's a myriad of issues that are going on. How many minutes do I have so I can just make sure that I put everything in? Encapsulate everything?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Just a ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

There's a myriad of issues going on not only with the senior groups although we don't know what we're calling senior groups as far as what their ages are, but also with the aging population myself. Not only on what we're going to do to stay on Long Island but how we're going to deal with our aging parents which are now living longer than we ever thought that they would. I'm a long distance caregiver myself. If I didn't have insurance for my mom, I'd probably wouldn't be able to work. So thank goodness for that.

I've been blessed to be able to work within the Town of Huntington because I can't really do a lot of travelling •• I wasn't able to until this month to talk to senior groups over the last eleven years. Working with the Town of Huntington, talking to all of the various senior groups about what they love, what they don't love, what their wishes are, what they would like to see in life, in the third stage of their life, etcetera. And seniors are very open with me. Basically I think it's because I don't walk in selling anything. And that's very important to

them because they have been very much saturated with people selling them stuff.

On the contrary though, what I'm finding out with seniors is they're very under educated when it comes to financial needs. So there is •• there is a discrepancy with how do you work with seniors and yet how do you educate them without having them feel that they're not being sold anything but they're being educated? So that •• that's been an issue for a longtime.

I have asked seniors the following questions which has always for lack of a better word, blown my mind. I've asked seniors consistently "what is the biggest wish you have before you die?" And other than the independence issue, financial independence, psychological independence, physical independence. I wonder if any of you can tell me what they say their biggest wish is before they die? Just in talking to seniors. Anybody? Steven.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Health.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Excuse me?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Health.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Health is. Well health and financial independence, yes. And the vast majority of seniors tell me, and you know, this is coming from, I feel like I am •• I am, you know the seniors are here, I'm here and this is where you are, you know. You can read all the books in the world, but nothing tells it like it is except from the mouths of those who tell it. Seniors tell me •• the vast majority of seniors tell me that their biggest wish before they die is that their children and family get along. As you know •• as you know, there is a huge problem between sibling issues, money, aging. I mean blood is thicker than water. Money is thicker than blood, however you want to put

it.

Seniors have a lot of issues within their families as they get older. They feel that •• I wrote •• I wrote a program called "Why my kids want my money and why I don't want to give it to them." It's a funny program because I think seniors should laugh. I don't think seniors laugh enough. I think that they are reminded too much about how long they have to live, and how much money they need, and what happens when they are get to be 85 and all their friends dying next door and across the street. I don't think they laugh enough. And I think by making them laugh, I think that they learn a lot.

So in putting together programs I'm working now with Frank Petrone in the Town of Huntington to put together my biggest dream program ever called "Bring your parents to work day." This is a program I conceived in a dream of mine about five years ago on why can't •• if we can bring our kids to work, why can't we bring our parents to work? And why would we want to bring our parents to work? Well, these are reasons why I feel "Bring your parents to workday" can be a great success.

Number one I work with Newsday and their Act II section on a regular basis so we can get good coverage for that. I'm working on a show with WLIW on speaking to our parents; so that also is a huge help. But more importantly I think that many of us, and I'm including myself, are so •• are so swamped with life other than the jobs. I think we all have issues. I think whether it's taking care of our parents physically, taking care of our parent's emotionally, I think that sometimes our parents don't understand that our life has depth. And that our life really just depends on how we take care of them.

And it's important to see after reading a huge research program from the National Council on Care Giving that we do get sicker financially, psychologically and physically than our parents do when we're taking care of them. So by bringing parents to work, I think that a) it will put them in a situation where they will be proud of us which I think, I don't think being proud has

a limit.

And I'll tell you quick ten second story, Ed {Kramer} you guys know Ed, right? Ed {Kramer} worked the Department of Aging up in Albany. And he brought his father in-law to work one day and he was 97 years old when he was working up there. And he was very excited about doing this. And he has this very like, not a huge office up there. And he brought his father in-law in and he said to him "dad, I want to see •• I want to show you where I work" and his father walked in and he said to him "I thought you had an important job." And he said "I do, you know, I have millions of people that depend on me." And his father in-law said "in this little office?"

So basically it really bonds the parent with the child. It also allows the parents to see where you work, understand that you have a nine to five responsibility and also gets them involved in your life in a different way than just the care giving issue. So I'm excited that we're in the throes of doing •• of bringing parents to work•day. And I think that we're just going to use the Town of Huntington and their 700 employees as kind of a, you know, an example of how well I really think that this program will work. And also I think I have to say personally, we're bringing in some very special speakers. I've asked Steven and Lawrence to come in to head up the elder care piece because I really have all my faith in these two men. I think they do a superior job with seniors. We've spoken together many times and always successful.

So, I think the first thing we have to do is make seniors laugh, give them more programs where they're going to get a kick out of it. Maybe generational programs, maybe programs about what it was like when they grew up, when we grew up and how their grandparents •• having grandchildren and great •grandchildren grow up. I find they laugh a lot about those kinds of things. Talk to them about sibling issues.

My particular program is about how to open up communications with your aging children to talk about money, death, taxes and fears. I talk to them about how to talk to their children. I talk

to them about situations that you can create where you're comfortable talking to your children about money; because most seniors do not open up to their children about these very important things. And it's really important at this stage in their life that at least they share their wishes with their children.

The other thing that I would love to see are some holistic programs. Programs that don't concentrate on getting old and what it's like as you're getting to be 90. But more holistic programs which is how seniors think as they age. I would think that •• that •• very importantly seniors need financial education. There's no question that they need financial education. I'm always amazed when I talk to financial service companies on how they tell me they don't thrust their company and their product on seniors. And many times they do. And seniors are really afraid to bring in the proper professionals because they really feel they're going to get taken advantage of.

When I speak to them, almost every speaking engagement, at the end they will ask me to recommend either a good elder law attorney, a good financial person. And I say to them, well, don't you have •• and they love George Roach because he comes in and he does all the very practical stuff •• don't you get that when these people come in? And they say, oh, you know, they all do the same thing; they try and take advantage of us.

So I would love to see like a continuum of programs that seniors can go to where they will not only feel good about their aging, which is so hard for them to do now, but also understand the issues that are involved in •• in family relationships, financial relationships. And I think that by doing that we can keep our seniors on Long Island.

As a side note, you know, before I finish, let me say this. A couple of months ago I was reading Newsday, in the rare times that I read Newsday because I have no time to read anymore, and I noticed that there was a •• a Florida/North Carolina expo, you know, the expo's that they usually have at the hotel's. And

I never really go to them. And I never have really gone to them, but this one I decided to go to. And I walked in on a Saturday morning in Islandia. I don't know if that's a Marriott or what that hotel is on the L.I.E. And there were hundreds •• hundreds of people my age walking around saying, I don't know what I'm •• where am I going to go, where am I going to live, I don't want to leave my kids, I don't want to leave my mother. You know, we are just as confused as our parents are.

And I think •• I mean, do I consider my a senior? You know, I am. But, you know, look at my mother and look at me, you know. There are nine generations between 55 and 103. So really what is a senior? So there are a lot of issues to be addressed.

But most importantly our seniors really love going to the town. They love going to these programs. They love being entertained. And they love to fall in love with the people who speak to them. Right, Steven? Right? It's not always about what they have to say; it's about how they have to say it. So that would be •• you know, if and when we do this, and it's going to be shortly with the Town of Huntington, I would love to see the other towns on the island give an opportunity, and even the smaller companies, to create a half a day to bring your parents to work•day and really get or parents involved in our lives as well as maybe hopefully establishing some sibling harmony which is so poorly needed •• so sorely needed within family relationships. And basically, I love those seniors. They have great stories. And you'd have to pay me to hear some of them but •• do you have any questions?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Questions?

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Please have some questions because you know the worst thing for a speaker is not to have questions.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Mystal.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Elie wants to know if he's a senior?

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Well, you know, I've asked seniors for years what do you want to be called? Seniors, elders? And you want to know something? Everybody's trying to find the proper terms. What is a senior? Well, I would like not to think of myself as senior. I'd like to think of my mother as a senior. Elders, no, they don't like that either. They like to be called by their last names. They like to be called by their first names. I think that the reason AARP has a huge problem getting people my age is because they consider us a 50 plus. And I think that for our generation that that kind of really extends to fifty plus what? So are you a senior? I don't know. We're the same age. Are we?

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

I don't know. I'm 60 years old.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Well, we're all pretty much the same age, except for Steven, who could be my son.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

I'm more like closer to Steven's age.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Okay. Those of us who can have a son Steven's age raise your hand. Okay, so there we go. Those of us who have grandchildren Steven's children age raise your hand. Okay. So who knows.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

The question that I have, the question that come up in my district I have about four senior centers. And the question that comes up a lot of times, they ask •• they do not ask it but it's in the back of their mind is that "are my children going to do as

well as I did?"

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

In regards to ••

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

In regard to their financial stability and their lives. Their fear •• somehow their children are not going to do as well.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Yeah. I mean there is, you know, there is a lot of fear.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

I mean I have that fear.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

First of all, you know, there is a lot of fear with money altogether. Nobody really knows how much you're going to ever need to retire or, you know, I go through that question myself. How do I know that I have enough money to retire and where am I going to go? I mean I'm going through that, do I want to leave my family? I'm going through that whole thing. I don't worry about my children because my son in•law's a Suffolk County cop and my daughter's a teacher. So together they earn \$175,000 a year and they're 33, so I don't worry about them. I'm not leaving them anything anyway so •• it's only going to the grandchildren.

But, anyway, seniors do worry about that. And the reason they worry so much is because years ago when the seniors came over to our country and many of them came •• immigrated to the United States, money was the most precious thing that they had and many of them didn't have those kinds of resources. One of the things that we did a couple of years ago was I got a call from the National Federation of Credit Union's to speak for their president's and board of director's. I was in Puerto Rico doing this. And one of their issues was that seniors had historically put money into credits unions, which, if you're familiar with credit unions, have been around forever. Like around the war it was really a great way to save money.

Now the seniors were passing away. And they were giving money to their children or leaving an inheritance to their children. And the credit unions were finding that they were losing the children to the credit unions because we have different ideas about how to invest our money, which we're all so brilliant since we lost so much during the stock market. But that's how we invest.

And so we created a program called Senior Day" where •• I mean, excuse me •• Family Day where we brought the seniors into the credit unions, we brought their children into the credit unions, and we brought their grandchildren into the credit unions. I think seniors are going to worry no matter what. I think they're going to worry no matter what. And I think that •• my mother has \$160,000 dollars left. That's all she had; was like 200 something. But she's ninety. And she feels like a millionaire, you know. And I think that it's really important, seniors worry so much about money because it really was a main stay of their life for so many years. How much is enough? That is the \$64,000 question. How much is enough? How much is enough for them? They want to leave for their children, they want to leave for their grandchildren. That's why I say it's so important to give them the right education.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

I just finished what I would call being a baby•boomer. First part of the baby boom •• I was born in 1946.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Yes, you did.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

And my mother passed away last year. But at the same time this sandwiched syndrome, where my mother was sick and I have a daughter in college. And, you know, so I had those two things to deal with.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

At the same time.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

At the same time. Taking care of my mother who suffered a stroke. And I had a young daughter at that time. She was a sophomore in college. And finding myself in between those two poles. And I don't know, I don't know what people my age are going to do about it because only now we •• people who have grandmothers. They have mothers and fathers who are ill and old. And they have children that have children themselves. They are grandparents themselves. You know, I could be a grandparent, because my son is 28. And he didn't have any kids yet. Thank God. But, you know, I could be in that situation where I have a mother, you know, who's sick, and I have a daughter who's in college and I have a grandchild. That's four generations right there.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

You're right, and that's not unusual. My daughter just was married eight years and she just had a baby and she's 38. And when that baby is 13, well go figure out •• she can be •• she will be an older mother who could need her own long-term care insurance. So that's why we do get sicker than our parents do because we take care of them.

You know, last year Newsday did a cover story called Elder Orphans. I don't know if any of you remember reading that story. Do you? It was in the Saturday section. It's called "who's going to take care of us when we get older?" Steven, did you read that elder orphan story? It was a heart wrenching story that they wrote. Because the truth of the matter is that we will take care of our parents because that is the job that we were brought here on earth to do even though we have other things in life that may be stressful for us. Who's going to take care of us? Well, try asking your children what happens when you get old if they're going to take care of you. And I can tell you some great stories, right? Great stories.

One story •• very quick story came from both my kids. I have two girls. And I asked one of them separately truth. I asked one of them separately, I have to ask you a question. We'll be

doing a new story on Newsday so I was curious to know if my children were going to take care of me. So I said to my oldest, if I ever get sick, you know, God forbid •• cause we always kind of put God forbid in front of everything, I don't know why we always do •• I said God forbid I get sick, you know, do you think you guys •• she's married with children. Would you be around to take care of me? And she looks at me and she said what about daddy? I said well, you know, dad's good support but lets just say God forbid, something happened to daddy. So she said how about my sister? So I was thrilled to be able to know that she pawned it off on her.

So I went back to my other daughter figuring, you know, someone's going to pick me up if I'm laying in the street bleeding. And I asked my other daughter what happens if God forbid I get sick? What about daddy? I guess it's genetic; must be genetic. And I said daddy, well you know, let's say God forbid daddy is in a better place. And without me it probably is a better place. And she said "hum, you mean daddy would be no longer here? How about grandma? Now she's got two masters degrees. She would think that my mother could be 140 by that time. I said, well, think about it; grandma is older than I am. She probably will go before me. She said well, how about my sister? So, you know, after talking to both my kids, who I love dearly and support continuously, I felt that I've got to start thinking about myself. And it's very hard to think about us when you have your daughter to think about.

And here's another staggering statistic that I know you all know. I won't tell you how many baby boomers there are because I'm sick of that statistic. But, I will tell you this. Because one out of two families get divorced these days, okay, there is a growing number of divorced women who are taking care of their ex•inlaw's who don't talk to their own children. So, you get along with your mother and your father in•law, you've divorced their son, and now the parent gets sick, you have your own parents alive and now you're taking care of your ex•husband's mother. It's staggering, but those are the things that are happening. You see •• I'm sure you've seen it in the practice.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

I've seen one.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

And guess what? We don't have anything we can go by to set a precedent. We can't say, that, well this works or that works. We are the generation that's going to make something work; which is why I believe it's so important as a community that we develop programs that not only address my parents, but that can address me so that I know that somebody out there cares about me and my mental and my physical health. And I get off Prozac at some point. Any other questions?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Kennedy.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Thank you for bringing this to us and ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Your welcome.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

•• similar to my colleagues I guess, my wife and I have had similar experiences as far as care for •• adult's care for •• parent's care for children. But one of the things I guess that I •• I hear about the global issues, I hear about the choices, I hear about all those other things. But when you're in the thick of it, kind of as like with Legislator Mystal, and you are this sandwiched generation, the things that you reach out for for pragmatic assistance that we all hear about in our experience just weren't there. And I'll talk about a single thing that we hear a lot about but doesn't translate in my opinion to reality and that's respite.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

That's true.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

When you deal with an ill adult, an ill parent 27/7 and you're talking about the housing and the feeding and the medical care and all the other things that really go along that continuum as you approach what's almost like a medical setting; and then you're dealing with children as far as, you know, college tuition and scheduling and running around and stuff like that, it goes to what you talked about as far as we as the caregivers, I guess become more sick ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

We do.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

•• then those that we care for. Because as we look to try and go ahead and get a four hour break to go ahead and maybe go shop or to try and take a movie or to do something like that and you reach out to these purported resources that are at the town or County or other municipal levels, they're not there. They're not there.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

If I can just address that for a minute. Number one, most emergencies happen after the County office is closed down. So three o'clock in the morning if your mother falls and she breaks her hip, you can't call the County. And that's the thing. And •• and with all due respect to the County, believe me, with all the due respect to the County and their resources, people either can't, don't know how, or in a situation where they're in a help me I'm in trouble situation. For me, the biggest word in my dictionary is proactive. I think that we need to be more proactive in giving resources to •• to our generation so that God forbid, and I mean this, when that time comes at least we know what to do or where to go.

Unfortunately, how do you say this in a •• in a •• in a practical way. We are a generation that doesn't like to get old. So when we start to hear about issues about our parents getting old and us getting old and we want to start to learn about what's going to happen when it happens because it's going to happen, we kind of don't want to hear. And then all of a sudden,

emergency. You're in the emergency room with your mother, your daughter calls, you know, she's up in college and you are like crazy because you have to now solve a problem that needs to be solved right at this moment; which to me, lends itself to the importance of at least giving these programs, these educational programs, these outreach •• there are a million outreach sources. Who's going to call them? Are you going •• if your mother fell and she had a God forbid a brain injury. Are you going to call the County of Aging and dial extension 123 for brain injury? Are you going to call a hospital? You need to know that there are resources even if there general and they need to be 24/7. Because in the middle of the night when you're having a nervous breakdown, you need somebody there for you and it can't always be your wife because she's having a bigger nervous breakdown than you. Because you know, whatever you through ours is much worse. It always is. That's a marriage.

But, it is, you know, seriousness, it's •• I absolutely understand what you're going •• and so many of us suffer in silence, which is why I told Frank when I met with him, we need in the companies on Long Island to form what I did at Symbol some years ago breakfast mentor groups, where employees who are dealing with care giving issues could just have a cup of coffee and bagel one day out of the week so that so they could share with each other what they're going through with their parents. Maybe it's just for their own self. Maybe it's just to know that they're not alone. Maybe it's to give them a resource that they can use that you've used that they need. But we need to know we're not alone. And many of us feel that we're alone in all of this and there needs to be a collective voice.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**  
Legislator Alden.

**LEG. ALDEN:**  
Hi, it's very interesting actually, you know, like the dialogue that's going on now and what Legislator Kennedy brings up is I think more of a moral issue than anything that you can, you know, focus in on governmental. I agree with you as far as the

educational end of it and that's a, that's a •• I think we've departed from some traditional values and some traditional teachings in America where the family and community was I think a lot more tight. And when I was growing up I could think back into our community and, you know, your lives revolved around either synagogue or church or you know ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

That's right.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

•• other types of community •• and that was the support that you needed and that's where you would go for the help. And now I think that, you know like, that boomer generation is a •• is so confused because all their lives they've been looking at, you know, doing things like satisfying their own needs and things of that nature and have forgotten that there's a broader picture out there. But I'll tell you the alternatives are not real good.

And when you look at what Congress did •• I mentioned this I think a week or two ago •• they took care of their own retirements and their own medical packages and things like that; yet they've never fixed a Social Security system. So, you know, that type of support for people is not going to be there. And unfortunately, my older brother, I just got him out of a •• he spent about two•and•a•half years in a nursing home because he was run over by car, but now I've got him back into an adult home and the nursing homes are •• they're pitiful. To go into a nursing home and see our •• you know, like generations before us and now part of our generation's sitting there in wheel chairs, you know, they wheel them of their rooms for a couple of hours a day, wheel them down, feed them, wheel them back into the hallways, and then wheel them back into their rooms. I mean, that is a •• that's pathetic. And, you know, when you go there, it really wrenches at your heart that, you know, why have we evolved into this type of system?

But as Legislator Kennedy points out, where's •• the other part

of it is, you know, to bring your parents home. I had one parent die at home. And he was in the hospital; had cancer and asked us to bring him home so he spent his last couple of days in the house. And my mother died in the •• in the nursing home because she had suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage, ended up staying in there, but the alternatives, you know, are very hard for you.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Well, the alternative, well, you know, we have to remember that the world doesn't know the difference between Medicare and Medicaid. That's the world at large, obviously not the people in this room. So, in talking •• in addressing your issue about outreach and resources, if the general world doesn't understand the difference between Medicare and Medicaid, and I know this for a fact, because I work with the government in developing a long term care program partnership for John Hancock and Met Life, which was instituted a few years ago down at the {O.P.M.} in D.C. offering long term care insurance for the 14 million employees, the federal employees that we have.

And in working with them, the biggest question that employees had when offered this long term care insurance is, aren't I covered by Medicaid? Aren't I covered by Medicare? So education is important. Unfortunately and almost everyone of us have issues and I can pretty much •• if it isn't just the three gentlemen up there, there's at least one or two other people in this room that probably are going through some issues because alternatives have never been present in our country. We •• it's up to us to develop those alternatives.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Absolutely. That's the responsibility.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

But a lot of it, of course, has to deal just the evolution of society and maybe more values and family values and •• but so much of it also has to do with just the changing times and the fact that the daughters of America are no longer home and able

to be the primary caregiver. Particularly living here on Long Island the high cost of living, they have to work. And so they have to, you know, be a significant part of the family income. And as much as they may want to strongly believe in keeping the cohesive family unit together and wanting to be that primary caregiver, financially they just can't afford to do it. And so it becomes that much more important to provide this kind of critical information to caregivers or those who are trying their very best to be primary caregivers, who will also have to balance not just the generations of family but the stress of career as well.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Absolutely. And every one of these caregivers get calls at work. Not once, not twice, not three times, but calls all day long. And I mean I have seen caregivers, I've talked to caregivers who've had nervous breakdowns. I've talked to caregivers who've had to •• who've left their jobs. There's \$3.6 billion worth of at home care by caregivers to parents who are also working. It's an average of 12 to 16 hours a week of direct caregiving to full•time working people. So you have to be able to find that time in your life to do it. And it's not just physical caregiving. It takes the guts out of you to do the emotional caregiving, too.

So where's the answer? I've been searching for a solution. Everybody in my company's always saying so what should we do to make this happen? And I say a collective effort is always better; but when an individual makes inroads, it's better than nothing. There's got to be a place to start. And good news travels fast. And I've lived here my entire life. I lived here when Nesconset Highway had stop for cow signs and we would stop for cows. And it only took an hour to get to Port Jeff from Manhattan with no traffic and the Expressway stopped at exit 49. So I've been here a very longtime. I don't want to leave Long Island; my family is here. I would love to have •• we have the best resources of everything else. We have the best beaches. We have the best schools. We have the best hospitals. Why can't we have these programs that will address our needs because it's only going to get worse.

So, I'm very sensitive and very much •• this is very much a part of my life. So, I agree with you, and I agree with you, and certainly to get together and just understand that we need a 24/7, even if it's a hotline •• nobody knows the hotline exists. Nobody knows that there are people out there •• there are nurses that work 24/7 that get paid by independent companies to answer your questions at 4:00 in the morning. People need to know that this is available.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**  
Legislator Eddington.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

Yeah, I have a question, Ellen, that I've been wondering. Is this more of a problem in a region than, like a global or a country wide? I'll give you an example. When I moved out from Brooklyn •• from Brooklyn and Queens in '73 to Medford, Long Island, my wife and I went and got some of these lawn chairs and we put them on the front stoop and said, okay, and we looked, nobody was around. Because in Brooklyn you sat on the stoop and you talked to everybody, you know, you went to church ••

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**  
That's right.

**LEG. EDDINGTON:**

•• the same church. And on Long Island it seemed like we •• I thought •• I said everybody isolates themselves. They said look in the back; that's where everybody is. And I'm wondering if this problem is because on Long Island we've isolated ourselves so we escaped the crowds, came here and isolated ourselves. And now we're not connected to a church. We don't have kids in school any more. We hide in our backyards, and nobody knows what's going. Do you see it as regional issue?

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Well •• no. It isn't a regional issue. In fact, the transportation, you know, Long Island, because we have to drive everywhere.

And now with the price of gas, more people are starting to say, you know, I've got to do everything. I'm going from point A to point B to point C because everything is so expensive. No. It's really •• if you want to talk about a global issue, an example would be China where you revere your parents as they get older. And then when the Chinese come to America, for some reason, which can't be explained all of a sudden the elders don't become as important; which is why McDonald's •• why you get fatter •• fatter Asian people because when they come to America that's who we are. It is •• I can't speak globally or for •• certainly minority generations suffer tremendously.

The Hispanic population is •• I have a friend who is a HR person. He's Hispanic, he's bright, he's wonderful. Nobody goes into the Hispanic community at all. And they really suffer. And they really are •• they really, you talk about ageism being an issue, that is big issue. It's not that we live on Long Island. It's that, and here we go, I swore I wasn't going to do this; but there are 76 million of us. And just like we took over the Vietnam War and that era, and I said I can love anybody named John Kennedy.

We have a •• we have a universal problem of people who are getting older, taking care of parents who are getting older, and there's like an old saying •• not an old saying; fairly new saying that says our parents are getting older and that's great and terrible. Because we don't know what to do. The hospitals are going to overloaded. We don't have enough nurses. I mean, we can't address all of those issues. But it is not a Long Island issue. If I asked you the last time you had dinner with your whole family •• I've asked seniors that question. I asked them in March when is the last time you had dinner with everyone of your children and grandchildren and they said Thanksgiving.

### **LEG. MYSTAL:**

At the last funeral.

### **MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Or at the last funeral, you know. So it's all about starting from the beginning and maybe making some inroads that would be

wonderful that could be an example to other communities around the country that they could look •• look we could get the publicity from Newsday certainly and WLIW being a part of that community and really reaching out to seniors and •• and their families. And offering some programs, outreach services, something.

And, again, with all due respect to the County, if you have emergency during lunch hour you can have a problem as well. So just have other resources available. Because in emergency situations •• you take two minutes. Somebody told me this a long time ago. Just keep this in mind. It's a little depressing but someone told me this about five years ago. How do you know when you're going to begin to be a caregiver? Well, you know that when your mother says to you could you reach that can of soup on the second shelf? I used to be able to but I can't do it anymore. That's the beginning of being a caregiver.

So I wish I had the answers. I just have the perspective from my own •• from all of your sides, it's not coincidence that everybody's dealing with something. And maybe in the end this will be a very good thing for our mental health because, you know, you can't function at work effectively when you're dealing with all of these other issues. And we won't even go to the •• into the guilt piece. So, any other feedback? Steven? No? Everybody had some feedback, which is good. I appreciate that.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay, thank you. Thanks so much for being with us this morning.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

I'm sorry to take so much time up.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

No, it was great. Great give and take and great information so thanks so much for being with us.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Thank you. It was my pleasure. Thank you for having me, Steven.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

If you have the time you might want to stick around for the next committee, because they're going to need a little lighting up.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Oh, if you want me to do a comedy routine, now you got to pay my fee. Okay. There's the fee that kicks in right now; okay? Do you want me to for hang around for that?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

No, I'm only kidding. You don't want to hang around for that.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Oh, okay. Okay. Well, thank you all very much. I left you not so much as a promotional tool, please understand that.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

You trying to sell us something?

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

No. Actually I just left you my {CV's} so that you'd see the work that I've done, the companies that I work with. And also a little Woman of the Year article. I didn't take the Woman of the Year article, I took the distinction article. So thank you all very much. Is there anything else, Steven, that •• okay.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

No. Very good, yeah. Thanks so much for being with us.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

Thank you. My pleasure. You guys take care.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very good.

**MS. EICHELBAUM:**

And take some deep breaths.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

New business, old business, very good. Motion to adjourn.  
Second, Legislator Eddington. We are adjourned. Thank you.

**(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 10:12 AM)  
{ } Denotes spelled phonetically**