

JPAC Action Report

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Congressional Update



As the 109th Congress was concluding its business in December, it passed a number of pieces of legislation which were signed into law by the President. Included in those measures, was the elimination of the threat to cut Medicare payments to physicians by 5.1% in 2007. Instead, doctors will receive a zero percent payment update, meaning that there will not be lower Medicare reimbursement rates in 2007.

When the 110th Congress convened, the Democrats held a majority of 233 seats, while the Republicans were elected in 202 districts. Consequently, the Democrats will control the House of Representatives and its Committees. In the Senate, the Democrats hold a slim 51-49 majority.

The new Chairs of some of the committees pertinent to the issues for which we advocate include:

Senate Budget Committee: Chair – Kent Conrad (D-ND);
Ranking Minority Member – Judd Gregg (R-NH)

House Budget Committee: Chair – John Spratt (D-SC);
Ranking Minority Member – Paul Ryan (R-WI)

Major Entitlements, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the Tax Code are under the jurisdiction of:

Senate Finance Committee: Chair – Max Baucus (D-MT);
Ranking Minority Member – Charles Grassley (R-IA)

House Ways and Means Committee: Charles Rangel (D-NY);
Ranking Minority Member – Jim McCrery (R-LA).

-Steve Swidler
IFSA Director

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Volunteering with RSVP



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), established more than 40 years ago, is a part of Community Service Society of New York (CSS), a nonprofit organization, which advocates on behalf of the poor in the areas of education, affordable housing and health care. RSVP is in need of volunteers for their Prejudice Reduction Program (PRP). If you have a desire to work with elementary school children, an interest in diversity issues and believe that it is important for young people to learn how to respect and treat each other equally, this is a terrific opportunity for you.

As a Group Leader, you volunteer four hours in New York City classrooms with children in kindergarten through fifth grade. The service consists of guiding small groups of students in anti-bias educational activities such as group discussions, puppet shows and drawing exercises. Team Leader positions require a greater time commitment and offer a monthly stipend. Team Leaders help support the daily activities of the volunteer team and work closely with school staff. Training is provided for all volunteer positions. Opportunities are available in all five boroughs.

If you are interested in working with the Prejudice Reduction Program, please contact Janet Poe at (212) 614-5548 or via e-mail at jpo@cssny.org.

– Steve Swidler
IFSA Director

IFSA Update

IFSA Spring '07 gets started on Thursday, March 15th at the Hudson Guild Community Center. If you are interested in attending and have not signed up, please contact me as soon as possible at (212) 273-5261.

Our IFSA graduates now amount to more than 590...and we are looking forward to the newest additions!

– Steve Swidler
IFSA Director



Assistance with Preparing Your Tax Return



The Community Service Society's Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program (TCE) is available to assist with the preparation of your tax returns, or to answer tax questions. TCE volunteers are certified by the Internal Revenue Service. They provide free assistance in preparing state and federal tax forms to low income taxpayers, age 60+, as well as those who are unemployed or disabled.

Bilingual volunteers are available in some areas. Assistance with taxes, the Earned Income Tax Credit and electronic filing of tax returns can be found at 110 sites in all five boroughs through April 15th. To learn more about the program, please contact TCE at (212) 614-5553, or via e-mail at ocolon@cssny.org.

– Steve Swidler
IFSA Director



JPAC '07 Membership Recognition Page...

JPAC continues to thank and recognize all of our members and organizations that continue to support JPAC by paying their annual dues.



Adams, Ruth
Adler, Leon & Lillian
Ahearn, Catherine
Almendral, Sonya & Alfredo
Anderson, Betty
Bailey, Eleanor
Balmuth, Miriam
Batchelder, Eleanor
Beach, Muriel
Beck, Mara
Bernstein, Hope
Bilander, Sylvia
Binder, Roy & Rose
Black, Linda
Blumner, Dorothy
Bradshaw, Anne
Braunfeld, Sara
Cadle, Phyllis
Camp, Nita
Caraballo, Daniel
Charney, Lila
Cheney, Alberta
Cohen, Joseph & Kate
Colangelo, Gemma
Courtney, Joan
Craddock, Florence
Crews, Herbert
Daniels, Florence
De Angelis, Barbara
Derzansky, Aliza
Dockery, Clare
Doran, Shirley
Dottin, Winnie
Eden, Carl
Emerman, Anne & Sidney
Erlitz, Arthur & Rebecca
Falk, Beatrice
Farris, Coula & Spero

Fier, Ida
Fiscella, Diana
Garay, Georgia
Garden, Roberta
Garshman, Edith
Gentile Jr., Albert
Gilliamsen, Mildred
Ginsberg, Miriam
Gordon, Regina
Grant Jr., Joseph
Greene, Allan & Helene
Groopman, Cynthia
Gurian, Esther
Hayott, Winifred
Herskovitz, Estelle
Hill, Barbara
Holden, Jaycee
Johnson, Ethel
Jonas, Mildred
Kamins, Deborah
Kaplan, Bertha
Kee, Mary
Kessin, Ruth
Koppelman, Becky
Levy, Barbara
Livingston, Mary
Loher, Lucia
Lubet, Evelyn
Manning, June
Markus, Gary & Donna
McFadden, Mary
Medina, Tina
Meezan, Joseph
Meisels, Inez
Miles, Elizabeth
Natkins, Glen
Petitte, Gerard & Ilene
Pitashnick, Edith

Podhaizer, Paul
Pope, Ernestine
Pulliam, Mary
Raffa, Jennie
Rice, Beverly
Roberts, Katharine
Robinson, Edna
Rosenblatt, Ida
Rosenstock, Esther
Roth, Deanna
Rothman, Rita
Sandorf, Claire
Sayre, Ebba
Scalone, Terry
Shanley, Joan
Sheer, Arlene
Sheren, Evelyn
Sherman, Anna
Simms, Jane
Singer, Donald & Sylvia
Snyder, Edward
Spector, Barbara
Sprung, Gloria
Staber, Annabelle
Strull, Pearl
Sucich, Kathleen
Swerdlick, Anita
Thompson, Maynel
Townsend, Vikki
Valle, Diana
Vaughn, Gwendolyn
Vazquez, Arcadio
Warkow, Diane
Waxman, Daniel
Weinberg, Adele
Weinberg, Sam
Weinstein, Ray
Winitch, Vera

JPAC would also like to thank AARP - Riverdale Chapter #1546 for supporting JPAC by paying their annual membership dues!

Verizon's LifeLine Program



Are you aware of the LifeLine Program offered by Verizon to low-income individuals and families to assist them with their telephone bills?

Verizon offers a discounted local telephone service (LifeLine) to low-income individuals who receive Medicaid, Food Stamp, Public Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veteran's Disability Pension, Veteran's Surviving Spouse Pension (SSP) and/or Home Energy Assistance Program. If you are not receiving any of these programs, you can still qualify for the LifeLine Program, if your gross income is \$1,702 a month for a household of one and \$2,226 a month for a household of two.

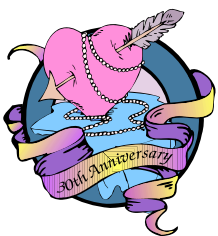
Benefits of the LifeLine Program

- **You will only pay \$9.85 for dial tone and 9¢** for each local call you make a month (plus tax); or you may want a monthly package that includes \$9.85 for dial tone and \$14.00 for unlimited local calls (plus tax).
- **Discount on installation fee** (instead of paying the \$85 installation fee, you will only pay \$10).
- **Possible saving of \$14.11 or \$14.53** on your phone bill each month.

It takes about eight weeks for Verizon to process an application. This program may not benefit everyone that is eligible. Please note that Verizon charges for each local call made (unless you have the unlimited package) and this package does not discount long distance calls. If you enjoy making many local and long distance calls, this plan may not be for you. Phone companies now offer packages that are true savings (for talkaholics, like myself) and provide unlimited long distance and local calls at a fix rate.

For more information about Verizon's Lifeline Program, please call **(800) 799-6874**. You can download an applications at http://www22.verizon.com/customerhelp/Data/Verizon/TemplateSets/consumer/pdf/Lifeline_English.pdf

-Bola Aribidesi
Bronx Coordinator



It's the Big 3...O...

The Membership and Outreach Committee (MOC) is planning a party (possibly, a garden party) to commemorate JPAC's 30th anniversary. If you would like to help with this event, please come to our next MOC meeting on Thursday, March 1st, 1pm, at JPAC, 132 W. 31st Street, 10th Floor, NYC.

- Bola Aribidesi
Bronx Coordinator



Timothy's Law Receives Governors' Signature

The following is a memo from Harvey Rosenthal, Executive Director of New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS):



"It is my great pleasure to inform you all that after decades of determined advocacy by numerous campaigns, including the Timothy's Law Campaign (TLC), Fair Insurance Treatment (FIT), Mental Health Equality, Not Discrimination (MEND), including all of you, that Timothy's Law is now law in New York State! Governor Pataki signed Timothy's Law today (December 22, 2006) at a brief noon ceremony at the State Capitol. On hand were Tom O'Clair and representatives of many of the leading coalitions who have made up the Timothy's Law Campaign.

What does this mean to New Yorkers? It means that New Yorkers with a number of more prominent mental health conditions who work in agencies with 50 or more employees will be able to get an unlimited amount of sessions with their mental health counselors (most are only allowed 20 visits per year). There will be no disincentives due to rising co-pays typically imposed after the fifth visit.

It also means that people with similar conditions who work in smaller businesses (49 employees and below) are guaranteed a minimum of 20 sessions per year and, if their employer makes the appropriate arrangements, they too can have unlimited visits with fixed co-pays. Current 30 day per year annual caps on inpatient care are also removed in a similar fashion.

Great gratitude and pride on this day are due to all of the NYAPRS members who hosted the Picnics for Parity over the past decade and to all who participated in Albany and local demonstrations and to all of you who made countless phone calls over the years to overcome discriminatory caps to mental health care the people want and need".

The law was effective on New Year's Day! It is significant because it extends coverage to many more New York State workers. Since the state will pay for premium increases for small businesses, people employed in those companies will now have insurance comparable to that of the employees of larger concerns. Included is treatment for mental illnesses, including major depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, anorexia and binge eating.

Timothy's Law also requires coverage for children with attention deficit disorder, disruptive behavior disorders or disorders that include suicidal symptoms. Mental health advocates remain concerned that the law is not as extensive as is needed. Although, Timothy's Law is an accomplishment, JPAC will continue to advocate for more complete mental health parity.

– Steve Swidler
IFSA Director



Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Healthy NY, which provide health insurance for those who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but can not afford private insurance plans, are exempt from Timothy's Law. Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus are federal programs. New York State would need to obtain "hard-to-get" federal waivers to change their mental health coverage.

Food Safety Is a Health Issue



There is a great deal of concern both from the general public and the scientific community regarding potential U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of food from cloned animals. Additionally, there may not be any required labeling to differentiate it from food from naturally bred animals. This would deprive the consumer of the opportunity to make an informed decision as to whether or not they wish to purchase those foods. There are unresolved food safety issues that must be addressed prior to products from cloned animals being made available for sale. It has yet to be convincingly determined if there is any health risk as a result of human consumption.

It is not known if the stress experienced by the animals subjected to the process of cloning results in health problems for the animals, as well as their off-spring. The FDA has not responded to petitioners requesting that it regulate cloned animals as a "new animal drug." Clearly, this is inconsistent with the regulatory process of the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA), which gives authority to the FDA to oversee the safety of food, drugs and cosmetics. Compliance with the Act would ensure that food from animal clones would not pose safety risks to consumers and does not pose any new animal cruelty risks.

Separately, there is the ethical issue of animal cloning. Many Americans have strong religious and ethical objections to animal cloning. These should be addressed in any regulatory process.

Take Action: Use the letter on page 9 to let the FDA know that we need to enact a moratorium on foods produced from cloned animals and establish mandatory rules for pre-market food safety and environmental review of cloned foods. Whether the food we are consuming is coming from cloned animals or genetically engineered crops, there is insufficient data to identify health risks that may occur in the near or distant future. These processes do not enhance nature, but are against nature! The FDA comment period ends on April 2, 2007.

*Above information was obtained from the
Center for Food Safety.org*

- Adele Bender
Queens Coordinator



Brain Health



In the past, I have written articles in this publication regarding the relationship of physical health and mental health, as well as, the importance of mental health in older adults. An article in the December 2006 issue of the *New York Times* entitled "As Minds Age, What's Next?...Brain Calisthenics" provoked me to do further research in this area.

The article in the *NY Times* discussed the growth of brain health programs springing up around the country in forward thinking senior centers, assisted living centers and in other medical facilities providing services to older adults and the huge "baby boomer" population. Health insurers such as MetLife are giving clients a book called "Love Your Brain" and offering brain fitness software.

To date, it is unclear as to whether the hopes for brain health programs are realistic. Research in this area has only begun recently. It is generally believed by the medical profession "that what is good for your heart is probably good for your head."

Experts have already made some specific recommendations in relationship to "brain exercise." These suggestions include trying activities you don't already do, such as learning a new language, playing games that involve memory and thinking ahead such as bridge or chess, taking up a new hobby or playing a musical instrument. It is believed that such activity "opens up" new brain paths and stimulates brain function. Neuroscientist Dr. Gary Small, of the University of California, suggests that performing simple cerebral activities such as doing crossword puzzles can help to ward off Alzheimer's disease. To be sure, we have only just begun to study brain health. Stay tuned for future information.

*Information for this article was obtained from
www.brainaustralia.org, <http://dan.hersam.com/archives> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health>*

- Woody Goldberg
Brooklyn Coordinator



OWL Newsletter

The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
March 2007

Greater NY Chapter Older Women's League
Box 1242, Ansonia Station
New York, NY 10023
Tel . 212-663-2932

Save The Date



OWL Membership Meeting – Monday, March 26th, at 1pm, being held at JASA Cooper Square, 200 East 5th Street, (at 3rd Avenue). A light lunch will be served.

OWL/GNY will hold a membership Meeting, on March 26th, titled "Are You Ready Legally?" An attorney has been invited to make the presentation. It should be a stimulating and informative meeting. Please bring your questions. If you wish, you may send them in advance.

If you have questions about the meeting please call Juanita Doares at 212-663-2932.

Will 2003 be the Year of Health Care Reform?

Paul Krugman asked the above question in a recent column in *The New York Times*, entitled, "A Healthy New Year." Excerpts from that column should make us question all the more why the leadership of this country is not supporting universal health care.

"The U.S. health care system is a scandal and a disgrace. But maybe, just maybe, 2007 will be the year we start the move toward universal coverage.

In 2005, almost 47 million Americans - including more than 8 million children - were uninsured, and many more had inadequate insurance... And then you wake up. A scathing article in yesterday's *Los Angeles Times* described how insurers refuse to cover anyone with even the slightest hint of a pre-existing condition.

People have been denied insurance for reasons that range from childhood asthma to a 'past bout of jock itch.' The truth is that we can afford to cover the uninsured. What we can't afford is to keep going without a universal health care system."

Activities

The National Board of OWL had a meeting in February. **Lowell Green** from the Greater New York Chapter, was the delegate from the Northeast Regional organization.

The highlights of the meeting will be reported in next month's newsletter.





March is Women's History Month!

I think it is appropriate in our March newsletter to recognize some older women who have made important contributions to our society. I have singled out two - **Ruby Sills Miler** and **Cynthia Adams Martin Clarke**.



I have been in physical therapy for my injured arm, and I have met some remarkable women there. Cynthia Adams Martin Clarke is one of these women. She just celebrated her 90th birthday. What an amazing human being! She and I began having conversations during our treatments. She is a woman full of energy, enlightening with a wonderful mind and sense of humor. She made me proud to be an older woman. Her church gave her a big celebration in honor of her birthday. Two hundred friends and relatives came from everywhere, including both the prime minister and the permanent representative to the United Nations of St. Kitts and Nevis, the Caribbean country where she was born. She sang for the guests at her party and made her own party dress!

Ruby Sills Miller is a Sister OWL and a founding member of our chapter. Deborah Harkins told a story about Ruby in her column, For Seniors Only, in the *Daily News* (July 28, 2002). Ruby was waiting in line to vote when a poll worker presumed to call her "young lady." Later Ruby presented the worker with a copy of a poem by Ruth Harriet Jacobs from her book "Be an Outrageous Older Woman" (written when the author was 77 years old). After reading the poem (*printed below*), the election worker assured Ruby that he would never use that expression again.

"Don't call me a young woman; it's not a compliment nor a courtesy but rather a grating discourtesy. Being old is a hard won achievement, not something to be brushed aside, treated as an infirmity or ugliness, or apologized away by 'young woman' I am an older woman, a long liver, I'm proud of it. I revel in it.

I wear my gray hair and wrinkles as badges of triumphant survival and I intend to grow even older ...Don't call me a young woman. You reveal your own fear of aging. Maybe you'd better come learn from all of us wonderful old women how to take the sum of your life, with all its experiences and knowledge and show how a fully developed life can know the joy of a past well done, and the joy of life left to live."



March 2007

Docket Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5739 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Sirs/Madams:

There is a great deal of concern both from the general public and the scientific community regarding the FDA approval of any food from cloned animals. If this type of food is made available to consumers, it is imperative that it is labeled to indicate its source.

There are unresolved food safety issues that must be addressed. The cloning process of the animals has resulted in deformities and other animal health problems. There are questions as to the risk that any health problems may arise from human consumption. The FDA must regulate food derived from cloned animals as a "new animal drug," and comply with the regulatory process of the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA). This would ensure that food from animal clones would not pose safety risks to consumers.

I ask that the FDA enact a moratorium on foods produced from cloned animals, conduct conclusive testing and establish mandatory rules for pre-market food safety and environmental review of cloned foods.

Sincerely,

Name_____

Address_____



Please keep this handy



**March
2007**

JPAC Calendar of Events

<p>1 Thursday</p>	<p>1 p.m. - Membership and Outreach Committee (MOC) Meeting - @ JPAC for Older Adults, 132 West 31st Street, 10th Floor, (between 6th & 7th Avenues). Please RSVP to Bola at (718) 365-4044.</p>
<p>2 Friday</p>	<p>1 p.m. - Mental Health Committee Meeting - @ JPAC for Older Adults, 132 West 31st Street, 10th Floor, (between 6th & 7th Avenues). Please RSVP to Woody at (718) 934-7718.</p>
<p>9 Friday</p>	<p>10 a.m. - Staten Island Borough Meeting - @ the Staten Island Jewish Community Center, 1297 Arthur Kill Road. Please RSVP to Steve at (212) 273-5261.</p>
<p>15 Thursday</p>	<p>Institute for Senior Action (IFSA) - Spring 2007 Semester Begins Call Steve Swidler at (212) 273-5263 for more information.</p>
<p>20 Tuesday</p>	<p>1 p.m. - Housing Committee Meeting - @ JPAC for Older Adults, 132 West 31st Street, 10th Floor, (between 6th & 7th Avenues). Please RSVP to Adele at (718) 286-1528.</p>

March is JPAC Advocacy Month!

Join JPAC for our annual legislative visits. This year, we are keeping it local. We will be going to local legislative offices to deliver JPAC's priorities and meet with elected officials, right in your neighborhood, instead of going to Albany.

You will have a chance to meet with your federal, state and city council representatives to discuss issues of concern to all JPAC members (ranging from housing, healthcare, transportation and social programs). All participants are expected to have attended a training session.

For more information please call Julie Green at (212) 273-5263.

Jewish Association for Services for the Aged
JPAC for Older Adults
132 W. 31st St. - 10th Floor
New York, NY 10001

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JPAC Action Report

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☎ (212) 273-5262 ☎

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JPAC is strictly non-partisan