



NARFE'S 2021 MARYLAND STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

The Maryland Federation of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) represents approximately 300,000 Federal employees and annuitants and the more than 800,000 seniors aged 65 and older in Maryland.

Goals for 2021

- Tax relief for Maryland's middle-class taxpayers, including the right to itemize deductions even if deductions are not itemized on the taxpayer's Federal tax return.
- Tax incentives for long-term care insurance.
- An increase in the standard homeowner's tax credit.
- Lowering Prescription Drug Prices
- Broadband Expansion
- Infrastructure

Goal 1 – Tax Relief

- Maryland has one of the highest costs of living in the nation that discourages “aging in place” and encourages migration to senior friendly states.
- Nine states do not have any state income tax and 14 states exempt all or part of Federal pensions from state and local taxes. Other states actively recruit seniors with tax incentives because they recognize the value of seniors as economic engines for job and revenue generation.
- The 2017 revision to the Federal tax code has resulted in a tax hike for many Marylanders who itemize deductions, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

What Needs To Be Done

- Eliminate or significantly reduce taxes on retirement income, so Maryland can aggressively compete with other more senior friendly states.
- Allow itemization of tax deductions on Maryland tax returns regardless of whether or not the taxpayer itemizes on their Federal tax returns.
- Expand the general pension exclusion to include all sources of retirement income.
- Correct the 1990's Maryland tax code revision, which raised the additional senior tax exemption to \$3200, but inadvertently limited it to **dependents** aged 65 and above. This exemption should be applicable to **all** Maryland citizens age 65 and above.

Goal 2 – Tax Incentives for Long-Term Care Insurance

- A recent study by Georgetown University concluded that Americans are seriously under-estimating their future needs for long-term care.
- Americans over the age of 85 have a 37% chance of being afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. This means that those seniors will require institutionalized or specialized home medical care.
- Rising operational costs have caused insurance vendors to leave Maryland. This has increased policy premiums on long-term care insurance. It is less attractive to new policy holders and more difficult for current policy holders to retain long-term care insurance.
- Incentives to encourage the purchase of long-term care insurance should be viewed as an investment in easing the burden on Maryland's Medicaid resources, which currently constitutes a quarter of our state's budget.

What Needs To Be Done

- Replace the current \$500 tax credit for the original purchase of long-term insurance with an annual \$500 tax credit for those who retain their insurance.

Goal 3 - Homeowners Tax Credit

- The current Homeowners Tax Credit Program is limited to low- and moderate-income homeowners.

What Needs To Be Done

- To retain and increase the Maryland senior population, give the homeowner's tax credit to all homeowners age 65 or older. Adjust the tax schedules for inflation and increase the assessment limits.

Goal 4 – Lowering Prescription Drug Prices

- In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 768 to create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, an independent body with the authority to evaluate expensive drugs and recommend appropriate methods for addressing these costs, including setting upper limits on what Marylanders would pay for them. In 2020, the Assembly passed HB 1095 and SB 669 to establish a dedicated funding source to support the Board's work by assessing a fee on pharmaceutical corporations, pharmacy benefit managers, insurers and related entities. The 2020 bills, however, were vetoed by Governor Hogan. We support the permanent funding bills and will work for their restoration.

Goal 5 - Broadband Expansion

- Expand broadband to provide more affordable, reliable Internet access. This expansion will enhance Internet-based applications for Telehealth and Telemedicine, civic engagement, entertainment, and online learning that will mitigate isolation and health challenges of seniors and reduce strain on family caregivers.

Goal 6 – Infrastructure

- Seniors face challenges who are still behind the wheel as well as those who are no longer able to drive. We support state policies and projects to make road and pedestrian infrastructure safer, improve access to public transportation and better coordinate limited transportation resources.

CONCLUSION: There are many important reasons Maryland state leaders must ensure that our senior population grows rather than shrinks. A growing senior population means more commerce, more economic vitality, a bigger tax base to pay for state services, and an increase in the amount of Federal funds received by Maryland. A shrinking senior population means a loss of state tax monies and will weaken the state politically since the loss of population also impacts the number of Congressional districts.

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