AARP advocates on policy issues that matter the most to Michigan residents age 50 and over and their families. In our state legislative advocacy efforts, AARP relies on more than 200 AARP Michigan volunteers, a state office headquartered in Lansing, and our 1.4 million Michigan members.

Each year, AARP Michigan publishes a state legislative agenda that we share with Michigan’s State Representatives, State Senators, the Governor, AARP members, our volunteers and the public. We published our original 2015 State Legislative Agenda document in March. The updated version you’re reading here includes legislative status updates as of July 31, 2015.

In addition to publishing our agenda and sharing our concerns, suggestions, support, or opposition regarding bills throughout the legislative session, AARP Michigan designates certain votes by the Michigan Legislature as “Key Votes.”

When AARP Michigan designates a particular vote as a Key Vote, we notify legislators how AARP would like them to vote on that bill and why. We also let them know that AARP Michigan will educate its 1.4 million members and all Michiganders about how each legislator voted on that item through AARP’s various communications channels.

As of 2014, over 3.6 million Michigan residents were age 50 or older. That’s 36% of Michigan’s population.

55% of the people who voted in Michigan in the 2012 election were age 50 or older.

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AARP MICHIGAN 2015 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- **CARE Act – SB 352**
  Passage of the Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act to help support and equip family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

- **Supporting Veterans**
  AARP seeks to honor and support our veterans, such as through helping Michigan veterans and their families connect with benefits and employment opportunities.

- **Access to Health Care – APRN Scope of Practice**
  Legislation to allow Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to use a greater scope of their training to treat Michigan patients.

- **Department of Community Health budget**
  - Increased access to *Mi Choice Medicaid Waiver, PACE, and In-Home Senior Services* to help older adults continue living safely and independently in their homes, rather than in more costly institutional settings.
  - *Respite Care* to allow family caregivers a much needed break so they have the strength and energy to carry on.
  - *Elder Abuse Prevention* and adequate resources for *Adult Protective Services*.

- **Fighting Fraud and Financial Exploitation**
  Legislation to more effectively prevent, detect, and provide penalties for fraud or financial exploitation, and to protect against loss of a senior’s home.

- **Retirement Security and Taxation of Pension Benefits**
  AARP supports efforts to repeal or reform the pension tax passed in 2011.

- **Bolstering Michigan’s Economy**
  Michigan’s 50+ population is a positive economic driver in Michigan's economy, and in greater proportion than their share of the population.

- **Work and Save**
  Commonsense solutions to encourage more employees to save for their future, particularly those in the private sector who don’t have access to a retirement plan at work.

- **Uniform Adult Guardianship & Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act**
  Passage of the UAGPPJA to save money, time and heartache for Michigan families when a loved one needs a guardian and more than one state is involved.

- **Affordable, Reliable Utilities**
  AARP fights to ensure that Michigan families have electric, gas, and telephone service that they can count on for their health and safety.

- **Age-Friendly Communities**
  AARP supports state and local efforts to make Michigan communities more *age-friendly*. 
The CARE ACT – Senate Bill 352

**Status:** SB 352 is awaiting a hearing before the Senate Committee on Health Policy. SB 352 is a legislative priority for AARP.

At any given time during the year, more than 2 million Michiganders perform a great labor of love: helping their older loved ones to live independently at home, where they want to be. You can read some of their stories on AARP’s www.IHeartCaregivers.org website or in the October 2012 AARP Public Policy Institute report entitled *Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care.*

AARP Michigan urges Michigan lawmakers to pass **Senate Bill 352 (O’Brien), which would establish the CARE Act in Michigan.** The CARE Act is a commonsense solution to help support and better equip family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home.

The CARE Act would ensure that hospitals:

- **Record** the name of the family caregiver when a loved one is admitted into a hospital.
- **Notify** the family caregiver if the loved one is to be discharged to another facility or back home.
- **Provide** the family caregiver an explanation and live instruction of any medical tasks – such as medication management, injections, wound care and transfers – that the family caregiver will need to perform at home.

Family caregivers shoulder great responsibilities. They are the first line of defense against older Americans being readmitted into hospitals or forced to move into nursing homes. Nearly half of these unsung heroes perform medical and nursing tasks that were once in the domain of only doctors or nurses. They clean wounds, handle feeding tubes, give injections, and manage complex medications – in addition to cooking meals, handling finances, doing the chores, providing personal care like bathing and dressing, and much more.

Michigan families have a proud history of taking care of themselves, and the CARE Act is one way to help families be better equipped to do so. Plus, it makes financial sense. As a recent study by the *Journal of Healthcare Quality* concluded, the incidence of adverse outcomes can be reduced significantly when hospitals adopt proactive, enhanced transition interventions to assure that family caregivers are well prepared when patients are discharged.

**Supporting Veterans**

AARP seeks to honor and support our veterans, including by helping Michigan veterans and their families access resources and employment opportunities. In 2015 AARP Michigan is partnering with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency to help more Michigan veterans.
connect with the benefits they earned through their service. **AARP also supports legislation such as:**

- **Senate Bill 155 (Gregory),** the Hire MI Heroes Act which would provide Michigan businesses with a one-time tax credit for hiring an unemployed veteran. **Status:** SB 155 is awaiting a hearing before the Senate Committee on Finance.
- **House Bill 4238 (Theis),** which would expand Michigan’s existing property tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans who are homeowners to also include the surviving spouses of U.S. military personnel killed in action. **Status:** HB 4238 is awaiting a hearing before the House Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs.
- **House Bill 4064 (Yanez),** which would allow 100% disabled veterans who rent or lease their homes to qualify for Michigan’s homestead property tax credit using a formula based on the amount of rent they pay. **Status:** HB 4064 was reported from committee 4/15/15 and is awaiting a vote on the House floor.
- **HB 4521 (Barrett), HB 4527 (Rutledge), SB 298 (Knezek) and SB 299 (O’Brien),** which would make it easier for veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder to get trained service dogs and provide legal protections for veterans who use service dogs. **Status:** HBs 4521 & 4527 passed the House 6/16/15 and are now before the Senate Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs & Homeland Security. SBs 298 & 299 passed the Senate 6/18/15 and are now before the House Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs.

**Access to Health Care – APRN Scope of Practice**

**Status:** SB 68 is awaiting a vote on the Senate Floor. **Note:** The version of SB 68 as introduced is a legislative priority for AARP. However, AARP opposes the significantly different S-3 substitute for SB 68 that was reported by committee on 4/30/15.

As introduced, **Senate Bill 68 (Shirkey)** would allow Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to use a greater scope of their extensive training to treat Michigan patients. **AARP supports SB 68 as introduced** as a way to increase access to health care for Michigan patients and reduce unnecessary health care costs. The bill would remove outdated barriers in our Public Health Code that currently keep APRNs from providing care to the full extent of their education and training. The majority of states around the country have updated their laws to reflect the role of APRNs, but Michigan has yet to do so.

Evidence-based reports from organizations including the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine and the National Governors Association recommend that states like Michigan increase patient access to care by allowing APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

Michigan has medically underserved areas all across the state where we have a shortage of primary care physicians, in both urban and rural communities. In places with a shortage of primary care physicians, patients are more likely to face delays in care that can lead to worse health outcomes and higher costs. This bill would not treat APRNs the same as physicians; they would still be working with physicians, rather than hanging out their own shingles. But it would open up more opportunities for patients to have access to care.
Michigan Department of Community Health Budget

**Status:** The House and Senate passed the FY 2016 MDCH budget on June 3 as part of the state’s “omnibus” budget bill, which was signed by the Governor June 18. Funding for MI Choice, in-home senior services and respite care was maintained at FY 2015 levels, plus PACE was expanded into 2 new communities, Jackson and Traverse City.

The annual budget for the Michigan Department of Community Health contains several items that help determine the extent to which older adults in Michigan can continue to live independently as they age. The overwhelming majority of Michigan residents – 81% – want to “age in place” in their own homes and communities. Moreover, helping seniors to live independently and better equipping the family caregivers who make it possible for them to stay at home can save the state money.

- **MI Choice Medicaid Waiver** and **PACE.** AARP urges Michigan lawmakers to continue to increase access for older adults to home and community-based services through the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver program. Doing so is a win-win for our state. On average, Medicaid dollars can support nearly three older adults or people with physical disabilities in home or community-based services for every one person in a nursing home. AARP also supports the expansion of the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) to include programs in Jackson and Traverse City.

- **Non-Medicaid In-Home Senior Services.** Together with Michigan’s Silver Key Coalition, AARP urges Michigan lawmakers to continue efforts to make Michigan a “No Wait State” for non-Medicaid supports such as Meals on Wheels and other in-home services provided through the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging and Area Agencies on Aging. These services are extremely important to older adults and their families. Often, simply providing assistance with the “activities of daily living” – help with things like shopping, laundry, and cooking meals – can be the difference that allows someone to remain in their own home, rather than go to a nursing home. These services can also be the difference that allows an individual’s family caregiver to remain in the workforce, avoiding lost productivity for Michigan businesses.

- **Respite Care.** AARP urges Michigan lawmakers to increase access to respite care services for family caregivers. Respite care can help provide family caregivers a much needed break so they have the strength and energy to carry on.

**Fighting Fraud and Financial Exploitation**

AARP Michigan urges Michigan lawmakers to continue to support the multidisciplinary efforts funded in the FY 2015 state budget to improve elder abuse prevention and detection in Michigan, and to ensure adequate resources for Adult Protective Services. In addition, AARP supports legislation to more effectively prevent, detect, and provide penalties for fraud or financial exploitation, such as Senate Bills 49 & 50 (Smith), and legislation to protect against loss of a senior’s home. **Status:** SBs 49 & 50 were reported from committee 2/12/15 and are awaiting a vote on the Senate floor.
AARP has also launched the Fraud Watch Network, a free resource for AARP members and nonmembers alike. Michigan residents of any age can sign up to receive real-time scam alerts and access to tools to protect themselves from fraud and identity theft, including extensive research on how con artists think, information about upcoming local events, and a fraud hotline.

**Retirement Security and Taxation of Pension Benefits**

The state of retirement security in Michigan doesn’t just matter to individual retirees, but to our state’s economy as a whole. Americans aged 65 and older spend a higher proportion of their income than other age groups, and older adults also tend to spend a larger share of their income locally, purchasing goods and services - particularly medical services - that are produced locally. As a result, significant ripple effects are created across our state and local economies based on increases or decreases in the amount of money that Michigan seniors have available to spend.

Since 2011, Michigan seniors have faced a new state pension tax, the loss of their annual $2,400 senior tax exemption, and increased property taxes due to changes in the homestead property tax exemption. For nearly 50 years, Michigan workers planned for retirement based on the promise that their pensions would not be impaired or diminished by the state. When the pension tax passed, it changed the effective value of their pension benefits after the fact. Worse, all these tax increases have come at a time when residents are facing an erosion of their retirement security in other ways, including threats of cuts to Social Security and Medicare at the federal level and reduced confidence that the pensions promised to them as workers will be fully honored.

**AARP supports** continuing efforts by the Legislature to mitigate the negative financial impacts of Public Act 38 of 2011, including:

- **Senate Bill 87 (Colbeck),** which would repeal the pension tax and restore the homestead property tax exemption to how it was before the changes in 2011. **Status:** SB 87 is awaiting a hearing before the Senate Committee on Finance.
- **Senate Bill 23 (Jones), Senate Bill 30 (Knezek), House Bill 4027 (Barrett), and House Bill 4086 (Graves),** each of which would repeal the pension tax. **Status:** SBs 23 & 30 are awaiting hearings before the Senate Committee on Finance. HBs 4027 & 4086 are awaiting hearings before the House Committee on Tax Policy
- **House Bill 4124 (Townsend),** which would make a small but compassionate change to ensure that surviving spouses are not subjected to a tax increase as a result of the death of their loved one. **Status:** HB 4124 was reported from committee 6/3/15 and is awaiting a vote on the House floor.
- **House Bill 4278 (Howrylak),** which would restore the homestead property tax credit to how it was before the changes in 2011. **Status:** HB 4278 is awaiting a hearing before the House Committee on Tax Policy
Bolstering the Michigan Economy

In the aggregate, Michigan’s 50+ population is a positive economic driver in our state, and it presents growing economic opportunities. Despite being only 36% of the state’s population, the aggregate economic contribution of Michigan’s 50+ population accounted for 47% of Michigan’s GDP in 2013 ($203 billion).6

People age 50 and over represent a significant share of Michigan’s workforce. 59% of people age 50-64 are employed, and people over 50 represent 33% of Michigan’s total workforce. Michigan’s 50+ residents are also innovators. Of the employed Michigan population, 12% of those 50-64 are self-employed entrepreneurs, compared with 7% of those 25-49.

Too often, debates over public policy in Michigan have viewed older Michiganders as a problem rather than an opportunity. And indeed there is a high level of financial insecurity among Michigan’s 50+ population: 69% of Michigan voters age 50 and over report that their income is falling behind the cost of living.7 Older workers are having difficulty securing good-paying jobs that allow them to save for retirement in the current economy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the re-employment rate is only 47% for workers age 55-64 and 24% for those over 65, compared with 62% for workers 20-54. Workers in the 55-64 age bracket average 46 weeks to find another job, compared to 20 weeks for younger workers.

For Michiganders 65 and over, Social Security benefits represent approximately 39% of their income, and nearly 23% of married retirees and 46% of unmarried retirees are almost entirely dependent on Social Security for their income. The average Social Security benefit for a retired worker is $15,528 a year, or for married couples about $25,000 per year.

Nevertheless, the aggregate impact of consumer spending by retirees is a significant, positive contributor to Michigan’s economy. Each dollar received by Social Security beneficiaries living in Michigan in turn generates nearly two dollars in spending by individuals and businesses, adding about $55 billion in total economic output to the Michigan economy annually.8

Americans over 50 also serve as a resource and safety net for their parents and children. According to a 2011 survey by Ameriprise Financial, approximately 58% of Americans between 47 and 65 provide assistance to their parents, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, personal care, and transportation, as well as financial support for such necessities as groceries (22%), medical bills (15%) and utility bills (14%). The same survey found that over 90% of this group provide some form of financial support to their adult children.

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Work and Save

AARP supports commonsense solutions to encourage more employees to save for their future, including public-private partnerships to develop “Work and Save” plans that can be offered to employees by small businesses, as well as to the self-employed. Nearly 20 percent of people age 55 to 64 have no retirement savings, and even among those who have saved, many will likely outlive their retirement savings. Among Michigan residents age 50 and over who are still in the workplace, 54% say they have or will delay their retirement for financial reasons.

Having a convenient way to save for retirement at work can make a big difference. When offered the opportunity at work to save for their retirement, seven out of ten people choose to participate. Research shows that having access to a retirement plan at work increases savings rates by a staggering 1,300 percent. However, nearly 80 percent of employees who work for small businesses don’t have access to a retirement plan at work.

Uniform Guardianship Jurisdiction – When Caregiving Crosses State Lines

**Status:** No legislator has introduced UAGPPJA legislation in Michigan yet during the 2015-2016 session, although AARP Michigan has language available.

AARP Michigan urges Michigan lawmakers to adopt the Uniform Adult Guardianship and Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act (UAGPPJA) because it will save money, time and heartache for Michigan families when a loved one needs a guardian and more than one state is involved. Michigan is one of only 8 states left that has yet to adopt the UAGPPJA.

In recent years, rather than adopt UAGPPJA, Michigan has enacted emergency guardianship provisions piecemeal, missing out on some of the benefits of UAGPPJA, and in some ways actually increasing the likelihood that families will need to endure duplicative guardianship proceedings and conflicts when more than one state is involved. For this reason, **AARP opposes SB 270, which passed the Senate 5/14/15 and has now been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.**

The UAGPPJA would not change Michigan’s underlying guardianship laws, or change the process for cases that only involve people and property within the state of Michigan. There are three types of circumstances in which the UAGPPJA applies:

- **Multiple Jurisdictions.** The UAGPPJA creates a clear process for determining which state has jurisdiction to appoint a guardian if more than one state is involved and there’s
a conflict. Example: Mom’s a snowbird who lives in Michigan during the summer and Arizona during the winter.

- **Transfer.** The UAGPPJA outlines a procedure for transferring a guardianship to another state and for courts to accept such a transfer, helping to eliminate expense and wait-time. With the UAGPPJA, if a family moves from one state to another, their guardianship transfers with them through a shortened process in both states.

- **Out-of-State Recognition and Enforcement.** The UAGPPJA helps facilitate enforcement of guardianship orders in other states by authorizing a guardian to register their orders in other states. Example: A wife in Michigan serves as guardian for her husband who has Alzheimer’s and the closest appropriate care facility is in Ohio.

**Affordable, Reliable Utilities**

At the federal level and in states across the country, AARP fights to ensure that Michigan families have electric, gas, and telephone service that they can count on for their health and safety, especially during extreme weather and other emergencies.

Beginning this fall, **AARP will work to educate and equip Michigan residents** regarding the telecommunications changes they will soon face so they can best protect themselves and their loved ones. In 2014 the Michigan Legislature passed legislation that AARP opposed which will allow telephone landlines to be phased out in Michigan beginning January 2017. Telephone service is a basic necessity for older adults, who are more likely than any other age group to still rely on landline service not only to maintain social contact but also to preserve their health and safety. We will also continue to serve as a watchdog on behalf of Michigan customers to advocate for reliable utility services, continued affordability, and necessary consumer protections.

**Age-Friendly Communities**

**AARP supports** state and local efforts to make Michigan communities more **age-friendly.** The essential pillars of an age-friendly community are: satisfying work and volunteer opportunities; the availability of health care and long term care services that promote independence, choice, and dignity; a wide range of safe and accessible housing options; safe and affordable transportation; neighborhoods and outdoor spaces such as parks and recreational facilities that are safe for all; social participation and multi-generational interaction; and access to information and communications technology.

Becoming a more age-friendly state or community creates opportunities to attract and maintain employers, and provides appeal for all ages, not just older adults. AARP looks forward to working with Michigan policymakers to harness the economic opportunities arising from our state’s changing demographic profile.
Additional Resources


5 The Role of Nurse Practitioners in Meeting Increasing Demand for Primary Care (Dec 2012). http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-health-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/the-role-of-nurse-practitioners.html


7 Attitudes Among Likely Michigan Voters Age 50+ (Hart/North Star Opinion Research for AARP, June 2014). PowerPoint available upon request.


For more information about any of the legislation that AARP is following at the State Capitol, please feel free to contact:

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You can also visit our webpage at [www.AARP.org/MI](http://www.AARP.org/MI) or follow us on Twitter at [@AARPMichigan](https://twitter.com/AARPMichigan) for real-time advocacy updates.

*I truly believe that for every member of our society, age and experience can expand your possibilities in life.*  
Jo Ann Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer, AARP
AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501(c)(4) social welfare organization with a membership of nearly 38 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities, and advocates on issues that matter the most to people age 50+ and their families, such as health care, employment and income security, support for family caregivers, retirement planning, affordable utilities, and protection from fraud and financial abuse. AARP has approximately 1.4 million members in Michigan. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates.