

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Rep. Michael Arcuri (NY-24) met with local seniors at the Ava Dorfman Senior Center in Rome, NY to announce two major pieces of legislation he has introduced to protect area seniors from fire hazards and identity theft.

“I am pleased to announce legislation I have sponsored to keep seniors safe where they live and protect their identity from theft and misuse,” **said Arcuri, who has introduced two critical pieces of legislation to keep seniors safe.**

“The legislation I have introduced in Congress will help local facilities upgrade and expand existing fire safety systems through a competitive federal grant program. But, making sure seniors are safe where they live is just one step. I have also introduced legislation to keep social security numbers off identification cards, to make sure everyone’s identity is protected.”

Arcuri’s legislation, the Identity Protection Act, is specifically designed to protect seniors from identity theft which can destroy financial security and leave seniors without a lifetime of assets and resources. Arcuri also recently re-introduced the Long-Term Care Life Safety Act to provide nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospices with federal funding to upgrade fire safety measures.

The Identity Protection Act would help protect millions of Americans’ identities by requiring the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to stop listing social security numbers on identification cards issued in connection with benefits under the Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Displaying Social Security numbers on government-issued identification cards unnecessarily places millions of individuals at risk for identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission estimates nearly 9 million Americans’ identities are stolen every year.

The Long-Term Care Life Safety Act, which Arcuri introduced in the 110th Congress as well, would establish a competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote professional installation of fire detection systems and fire prevention technologies in nursing homes, hospice centers, and assisted living facilities.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 2,800 fires are reported per year in nursing homes — or roughly one for every six nursing homes. Approximately 60% of skilled nursing facilities in New York were built in the 1960s and the 1970s. Although virtually all

facilities in New York are at least partially covered by fire sprinklers, many facilities fall short of the “fully sprinklered” definition which will be employed by the federal government within the next five years. Arcuri’s legislation would allow facilities access to federal funding to upgrade fire prevention systems and meet new requirements. It would authorize \$40 million for each fiscal year 2008 through 2012. Regulations would be developed by HHS, and funding would be subject to the annual appropriations process.

In the 24th Congressional District, there are 90 assisted living centers, 12 hospice and palliative care centers, and 42 nursing homes.

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