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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Voting Focus Group: Deaf Students and Voting

On November 17th, CIDNY led a focus group discussion about voting at LaGuardia Community College (LAGCC) with twelve Deaf students. The conversation about why people vote or choose not to vote was so dynamic that the hour and a half session flew by. A lively exchange took place when one student said he wants to see politicians reach out and hear about the needs of the Deaf community before he will consider voting. CIDNY emphasized that it is up to us to go to the politicians to educate them on the issues we care about. Several students expressed interest when CIDNY offered to help the group arrange and prepare for meetings with politicians and the group was invited to join us on a trip to Albany in February.

When the group was asked what they would communicate to President Obama about their concerns if he were in the room, the following issues were raised:

- The opportunity to get better jobs
- Politicians should have knowledge of Deaf culture
- More access to media – captions and sign language should be included in televised debates
- Funding for better education for Deaf students
- Everyone should understand that hearing people and Deaf people are equal



- Opportunities to learn about candidates through Q&A and back and forth – when Cuomo came to the LAGCC as a candidate, there was no

ASL interpreter.

If you are interested in becoming part of this group, please contact Rima McCoy at rmccoy@cidny.org.

Important Notice: Housing Protection at Risk

New York is considering cutting the Rent Regulated and Stabilized Apartments Program next year on June 15. This program affects people who receive the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) and Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). If we are going to



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stop the loss of this important housing program, we must start planning now. Contact Eva Eason at 646-442-4156 to get involved and help save our housing subsidy!

Tell Congress: Don't Cut Social Security

Leaders of a Commission in Washington have proposed deep cuts to Social Security. They propose to reduce the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), which does not pay enough as it is, for people receiving Social Security starting in 2012. This would mean that benefits would be reduced by 3.7 percent after 10 years of receiving benefits and by 6.5 percent after 20 years, according to the Social Security Chief

Actuary. Another proposal would cut benefits up to 36 percent for middle income workers. Benefits for retirees, survivors and disabled workers would be cut between 17 percent and 36 percent for young people entering the workforce today. A third proposal would raise the retirement age to 69. The effect of raising the retirement age would be a 13 percent benefit cut on top of the 13 percent cut already made when the retirement age was increased from 65 to

67. Call your senator and congress member and tell them that Social Security belongs to the people who have worked hard all their lives and contributed to the program. These proposals break that promise.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Opens in November

HEAP is available as of November 1st. Do not miss your opportunity to enroll in this program. HEAP is a federal program which can provide up to four months of utility assistance for bill past due, and offers furnace repair and/ or replacement.

Visit www.cidny.org and click on "Fact Sheets" to find complete information on how to qualify and apply. You can also print the application directly from

CIDNY's website or you can visit www.mybenefits.ny.gov to use the HEAP pre-screening eligibility tool. CIDNY additionally offers Benefits CheckUp which allows you to see if you qualify for HEAP and other public benefits. We can assist you by phone or you can stop in for our Benefits Clinic Tuesday December 21st, 2pm to 4pm.

Don't get left in the cold, take the time to see if you qualify.



CIDNY Quick Take