



| AARP New York, One Commerce Plaza, Suite 706 | Albany, NY 12260
518-434-4194 | 518-434-6949 fax | www.aarp.org/ny

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Contact: David Irwin (518) 447-6723
Bill Ferris (518) 447-6712

NEW YORK CELL PHONE LEGISLATION PUTS SAFETY FIRST

*AARP Backed Bill Poised to Tackle Coverage Fees and Contract Issues –
Moves One Step Closer to Becoming Law*

ALBANY, New York - Using cell phones as a safety tool in case of an emergency is the top reason most older New Yorkers give for buying their cell phones. However, what most don't know is that their phone and e-911 may not always work where and when they need it most.

AARP hopes to change that, and was joined by Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer, Chair of the Assembly Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee and Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell, in urging their fellow lawmakers to pass the "Wireless Telephone Service Consumer Protection Act" (sponsored by O'Donnell). This week, the legislation made a step forward by passing out of the committee chaired by Pheffer.

"New Yorkers, especially older persons are depending on their cell phones working when they need them, especially during an emergency," said Lois Aronstein, AARP New York State Director. "It's alarming that New York consumers don't have all the necessary information they need to know whether their cell phones will work or not; that's the key reason AARP is pressing for this new law."

"This legislation would add much needed consumer protections to the ever-changing and often bewildering wireless world and will help customers make informed decisions about their cell phone service. The need for consumer protection in this unregulated industry is critical," said Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell.

"As Chair of the Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee, I recognize that many consumers have problems with their wireless service. The Committee has worked diligently to better understand the issues at hand and to find a legislative solution to address these concerns. I feel that the passage of this legislation is an important step in increasing consumer protections in our state," said Assemblywoman Audrey I. Pheffer.

"Assemblyman O'Donnell and the AARP have been leaders in the fight to protect the rights of senior consumers and it is a fight that I am happy to be part of. This is legislation I will be proud to introduce in the Senate and I look forward to working with AARP members to bring it to reality this year. The time is now for New York State to let cell phone providers know that the rights of New York residents are more important than profits," said Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District).

The legislation would require cell phone companies to provide more detailed coverage maps, including where the e-911 function works, to help people to better use their cell phones for safety matters.

"AARP commends Senator Flanagan, Assemblyman O'Donnell and Assemblywoman Pheffer for their dedication to helping cell phones become a stronger and more useful safety tool for all New Yorkers," added Aronstein.

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Other key provisions of the legislation are requiring cell phone companies to disclose all hidden fees, surcharges and taxes, and allow people to cancel their contracts fifteen days after receiving their first bill without having to pay hefty penalties.

AARP has over 2.6 million members in New York State. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; engage in legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy; assist members in serving their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These include *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *Segunda Juventud*, our quarterly newspaper in Spanish; *Live and Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for National Retired Teachers Association members; and our Web site, www.aarp.org. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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