



2017

**BIOGRAPHIES
VOICES FORUM**

*ELIZABETH B. RITTER
COMMISSIONER
STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING*

*NANCY SHAFFER
STATE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN*

*ROBYN GRANT
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY
NATIONAL CONSUMER VOICE*

*MICHAEL MICHALSKI
CONSULTANT/RETIRED
REGIONAL OMBUDSMAN*







Elizabeth B. Ritter
Commissioner
State Department on Aging

Betsy Ritter was appointed Commissioner of the State Department on Aging in January, 2015, after serving ten years as the State Representative from the Towns of Waterford and Montville. In that time she served as Deputy Speaker, Co-Chair of the legislature's Committee on Public Health, and Co-Chair of the Medical Assistance Program Oversight Committee. Her legislative focus centered on healthcare reform, access to health and human services, provision of safe and reliable home and community based services, and healthcare regulatory issues.

Before her election as State Representative, Betsy served the Town of Waterford as its Tax Collector, Town Treasurer, and Registrar of Voters. Betsy and her husband have lived and raised their family in the Quaker Hill section of Waterford, since the 1980s.

Her previous career includes ten years work as a hospital financial manager.

Since her appointment, Betsy has worked to complete the organization of the State Department on Aging as an independent agency and advocated for and integrated Connecticut's CARE Act to ensure that caregivers are given direct support for patients discharged from hospitals and nursing homes. She continues to



advance the growth of CT's Elder Justice Coalition, strengthen our state network of caregivers, and advance and support the work of

our senior centers and municipal agents. As a result, the State Department on Aging has realized new opportunities through federal grants bringing resources to CT's aging and disabled population. Betsy brings a philosophy of collaboration and partnership to state government and to our growing aging network. She conscientiously and effectively works to fulfill the Department's mission *"to empower older adults to live full independent lives, and provide leadership on aging issues on behalf of older adults, families, caregivers, and advocates"*. She truly enjoys the opportunity to not only speak to, but to also hear from various groups within the aging network throughout the state.



— Growing Older Together — 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105 . 860-424-5274, toll free 1-866-218-6631 . website: www.ct.gov/aging . email: aging.sda@ct.gov



NANCY B. SHAFFER
STATE LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

Nancy Shaffer was appointed the Connecticut State Long Term Care Ombudsman in 2006. In this role, she oversees the statewide Program in its advocacy work for more than 30,000 long term care consumers who reside in skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes, and assisted living/managed residential communities. Ms. Shaffer identifies issues and develops policies, regulations and legislation to improve the supports and services for these individuals.

Ms. Shaffer holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and a Master's Degree in Human Development/Gerontology. She has worked extensively in the long term care continuum of services and supports in Connecticut. She is a member of the Long Term Care Advisory Council, the Connecticut Elder Action Network and actively participates in a number of stakeholder workgroups, legislative task forces and study committees. She is an active member of the National Association of State Ombudsman Programs and has served on its Board. Ms. Shaffer promotes quality care and services for elders and disabled individuals in all settings and is committed to individual choice no matter age and/or disability. During her tenure as State Ombudsman Ms. Shaffer has promoted issues of importance to residents including "Fear of Retaliation". This Connecticut Long-Term Care Ombudsman initiative



gained national attention and now many State Ombudsman Programs throughout the country use the video and curriculum developed by Connecticut in order to train their staff and volunteers about residents' perceptions and fears about retaliation. The initiative also led to the Connecticut General Assembly passing the first legislation of its kind in the country which recognizes the need for greater awareness and education of the issue of Fear of Retaliation for long term care residents. Senate Bill 519 mandates annual training for nursing home caregivers.





ROBYN GRANT
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Robyn Grant is the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care. In this capacity, she is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the Consumer Voice's public policy agenda and growing and mobilizing the grassroots network to support the organization's policy work.

Prior to assuming this role, Robyn was the Director of Advocacy and Outreach. Before joining the Consumer Voice, she served as the Long Term Care Policy Director at United Senior Action, an Indiana senior advocacy organization, and a consultant with the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center. She has a Master's in Social Work with a specialization in aging. Robyn was the Indiana State Long-Term Care Ombudsman for eight years and president of the National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs for two terms. She has also served on the Consumer Voice Board of Directors.





**MICHAEL MICHALSKI
CONSULTANT/RETIRED
REGIONAL OMBUDSMAN**

Michael graduated from Springfield College in 1974 with a Bachelor in Science Degree.

He worked as a Rehabilitation Assistant for the Holyoke Geriatric Authority and later moved to work as a case manager supervisor for home care services with WestMass Elder Care and later advanced to being Program Director of the Ombudsman Program within the A.A.A.

Michael joined the State of Ct in 1994 as a Regional Ombudsman starting his career in Waterbury and then transferring to the Hartford office in 1995. Over the years he has been witness to the LTCOP moving from the former Department on Aging to the Department of Social Services and now, once again, The Department on Aging, under the direction of Commissioner Betsey Ritter.

Michael has worked with a multitude of residents, family members and nursing home administrations encouraging and fulfilling residents' rights and advocating for resident centered care. His focus was getting the residents' perspective on how their needs could be better met while they lived in a long term care facility.





Michael was an active participant in several key committees, including Challenging Behaviors, Cultural Change, Best Practices, Fear of Retaliation, Voices Forum, Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils. He also trained and worked to enhance the Volunteer Resident Advocates to compliment the Ombudsman Program with a goal of the Program being more visible to the residents.

Michael retired from State service and the Ombudsman Program this past Spring but still consults on a limited basis with the Program and with Nursing Homes residents.



