



New York City Comptroller  
**Scott M. Stringer**

**NEWS**

PRESS RELEASE

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## **COMPTROLLER STRINGER & AARP NEW YORK TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND THE NUMBER OF IDENTITY THEFT PROTECTION EVENTS IN 2015**

(NEW YORK, NY) – New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer and AARP New York State Director Beth Finkel kicked off the 2015 Shred Day event series in front of the Union Settlement Association in East Harlem on Monday. In response to high demand, the partnership between the Comptroller’s office and AARP New York—now in its second year—will nearly double the number of Shred Day Events throughout the City.

“Identity theft is a very real threat – it can leave unknowing victims in a deep financial hole, and completely destabilize lives and plans for retirement,” Comptroller Stringer said. “We have to protect our seniors, who are at an even higher risk because they exchange personal and financial information frequently with known targets such as medical offices. In partnership with AARP, we are proud to provide counseling and shredding services that help to eliminate the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands.”

In his first year as Comptroller, Stringer and AARP New York joined together to hold 27 fraud workshops, in multiple languages, throughout the City. Constituents at these events requested free shredding services to help protect them from identify theft and fraud, which became the impetus for Shred Day events. Last year, the Comptroller and AARP New York held 10 Shred Day events from the North Shore on Staten Island to Co-Op City in the Bronx. This year, they will nearly double the number of events, with 18 Shred Days scheduled, including the first four events, which were announced today:

- Flushing, Queens-Bowne Park, May 20<sup>th</sup>
- Soundview, the Bronx-May 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Penn South Towers, Manhattan-June 3<sup>rd</sup>
- The Tides on Staten Island-June 4<sup>th</sup>

"Identity theft is one of the most prevalent types of fraud encountered by people age 50 and over," said Beth Finkel, State Director of AARP in New York. "By doing something as simple as shredding their documents, New Yorkers can safeguard their identity along with their hard earned credit rating and retirement savings from unscrupulous thieves. AARP New York is pleased to see the success of this joint effort with Comptroller Stringer and we thank him for his leadership in providing this vital service to New Yorkers," added Finkel.

Combating fraud is a priority for AARP New York, which represents approximately 750,000 members age 50-plus in the five boroughs of New York City. In a 2014 report, AARP New York found that identity theft or credit card fraud had impacted roughly one-fifth to one-fourth of 50+ voters in New York City, and 75% are concerned with becoming a victim of identity theft, which was tops among all types of fraud. Additional details on these Shred Day events and upcoming events can be found on the AARP New York City web site at [www.aarp.org/nyc](http://www.aarp.org/nyc).

Comptroller Stringer has been a long-time supporter of safety measures against identity theft. A report released when he served as Manhattan Borough President in 2013 found that over 38,000 New York City residents were victimized by identity theft in 2011 alone, suffering damages of over \$1.5 billion. In 2012, New York ranked fifth in the country for the number of identity theft complaints submitted to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Last year, fraudsters stole \$16 billion from 12.7 million U.S. consumers in identity theft schemes, according to the 2015 Identity Fraud Study.

"If you are seeking prevention, or if you are a victim of identity theft, my office will work diligently with AARP to ensure every resource is available to you," Stringer said. "I want to thank AARP New York for their partnership in delivering this important service."

Additionally, this year's Shred Day events will benefit from co-sponsorships by local elected officials from the relevant districts, to optimize outreach efforts. Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez, State Senator Jose Serrano, and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito participated in kicking off the year's first event in East Harlem.

"New Yorkers can protect themselves from identity theft with simple precautions that prevent sensitive information from falling into the wrong hands," said Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. "Unfortunately, thousands of New Yorkers fall victim to identity theft each year. I encourage everyone to make use of this opportunity to safely and responsibly dispose of personal documents by participating in shred day, and thank Comptroller Stringer for helping New Yorkers protect their private data."

"It is of critical importance that we protect our sensitive and private information from predatory identity thieves," said Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez. "I applaud Comptroller Stringer for offering a free and easy way for New York City residents, in particular the elderly, to dispose of private documents."

"In this digital day and age, cyber-crimes like identity theft are an unfortunate reality. Having your personal information fall into the wrong hands can have catastrophic consequences. Educating the public on how to protect your identity and your finances is a crucial step in reducing cyber-crimes. Many thanks to Comptroller Stringer for working towards safeguarding our communities by bringing this event to El Barrio," said Senator José M. Serrano.