

BIG I CNY

# MEMBERSHIP

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Promoting the value of **independent insurance agents** in Central New York



**BIG I**

CENTRAL NEW YORK



*“Our mission is to promote the value of independent insurance agencies in Central New York and provide quality programs, education and networking for our members.”*

## Officers

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Jeff Mirabito  
*Mirabito-Gresham Insurance & Bonds Agency, LLC*

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Hello,

I want to start by saying that it is an honor to be your president. Time is flying since I was installed with your dedicated board of directors last June at Timber Banks. We are a group of independent agents and carrier reps that enjoy working together and we have your back here in CNY. Feel free to reach out to any of us about issues that are impacting your agency.

2024 is starting out to be challenging with a hard market for both personal and commercial lines. In times like these the association will play an important role in providing information, working on legislative issues, providing opportunities to network and giving back to our community. Some exciting news is that this year's Go Big event will be held close by at Turning Stone Resort and Casino. You will learn from industry experts, solution providers with workshops, insights on AI & agency tech and more. Plus enjoy a game of golf to support IAPAC!

Take advantage of your membership and check out our website for information on upcoming events including the Big I CNY golf tournament on June 24 at Timber Banks (registration opening later this month).

Hope to see you at Go Big on May 14!



**Jeff Mirabito**

*President, Big I CNY*

*Mirabito-Gresham Insurance & Bonds Agency, LLC*



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## February 27

### Coffee & Connect: Get to Know NextGen

Geared towards young-ish and new-ish insurance pros, join this free webinar to learn all about NextGen.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## March 21

### Shot Clock Social

The Press Room Pub  
220 Herald Place  
Syracuse, NY 13202

The Shot Clock Social lineup includes networking, 2 drink tickets, bar-favorite snacks, AND a great workshop to improve your insurance game put on by renowned Dale Carnegie Training.

We love a good charity so we're supporting ED23HOOPS, a local youth basketball program founded by former SU star Eric Devendorf. This is your chance to complete a tournament bracket and help aspiring young athletes. After the championship game, we'll donate \$250 to ED23HOOPS and the person with the best bracket will win \$250 cash and bragging rights.

Sport your favorite team's jersey and join us on March 21st!

Tap in when you can. We understand you may only be able to join us for part of the Shot Clock Social. See the Game Plan below for highlights.

#### Game Plan

Food available 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM  
and 4:00 PM – 8:00PM

Dale Carnegie Training Workshop starts at 5:30 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

# Charity, Community & Cheer at the Big I CNY Holiday Party

More than 100 agents and company reps celebrated the new year at Coleman's on Thursday, January 11th. Everyone enjoyed great conversations, meeting new business partners, food, and drink. As is tradition, attendees donated bags of new winter hats, gloves, scarves, and other apparel to St. Lucy's Church. The church then distributes the clothing to families in need.



Prior to the party, the board held a reception where they presented checks for \$1,000 each to 15 CNY charities from the proceeds of the 2023 golf tournament. This year's charities are:

*David's Refuge  
In My Father's Kitchen  
Francis House  
Sleep in Heavenly Peace  
Honor Flight  
Meals on Wheels  
Clear Path for Veterans  
Road to Emmaus Ministry*

*CNY Bear Team  
Erin's Angels  
Joseph's House  
Food Bank of CNY  
Central Assoc for Blind & Visually Impaired  
Brady Faith Center  
Building Men*

# GOBIG

**BIG I**  
NEW YORK

May 13 & 14 | Turning Stone Resort Casino

Workshops | Best-in-class Solution Providers | Executive Insights Panel  
Top-shelf Networking | AI & Tech | Memorable Learning  
Luncheon, Awards, & Swag | Golf | Great Location!

Some wild roads of the past few years have brought us to this moment. COVID. New workflows of in-person, to remote, to hybrid, to whatever today is. A hard market. A turnover of leadership, or leadership about to transition. New people joining the team without insurance, or even office, experience.

The roads are converging. It's the perfect time to get our new bearings. To learn what tools we need in our pack, what people on the journey we need to talk to, what skills will help with survival, and what path will lead us to where we need to go.

Go Big will bring together what and who you need to know in one place.  
It's the right event, at the right time, for your agency.

And with an exciting new venue, it will be more fun than ever.

**This is the premier event for NY's independent agents.**

**REGISTER NOW: [BIGINY.ORG/GOBIG](https://biginy.org/gobig)**



Featuring Don Polczynski (*MS AgencyCFO™ Partner & President*), Roe Polczynski (*AgencyCFO™ Founding Partner & Executive Advisor*), Claudia St. John (*President, Workplace Advisors*), and so many others!



# Your insurance career is more than **meets the eye.**

**WHAT:** #DayInTheLife Social Challenge

**WHEN:** February 28, 2024

**WHERE:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X

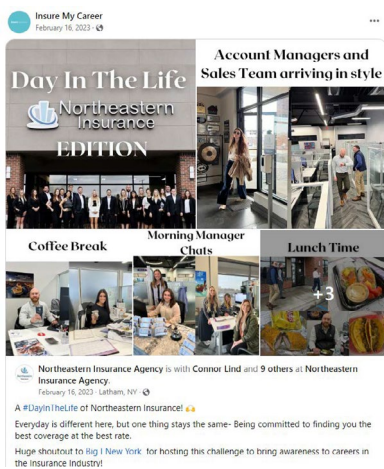
Join us on February 28, 2024 by sharing a photo or video on your social channels with the hashtags **#DayInTheLife** and **#InsureMyCareer**.

Our goal is to promote awareness for careers in the insurance industry by highlighting how a single day in the life can be drastically different from person to person. There is great diversity within our industry, and we want to show that off!

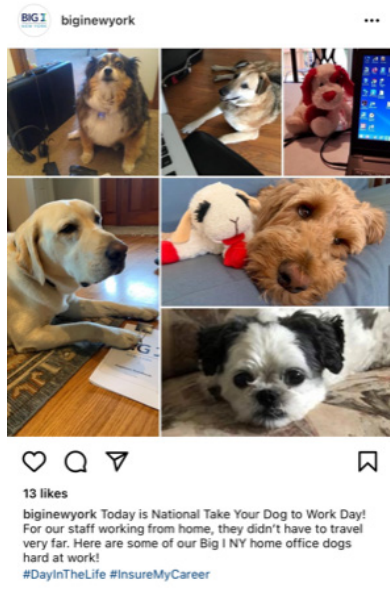
Not sure what to share? If it in any way pertains to your work day on February 28th - almost anything goes! Still stuck? Here are a few ideas to start:

- **Your Current Office** (Example: Working from home? Have a hybrid workforce? Do you set your own schedule? Share the ways that your career offers flexibility.)
- **Milestones** (Example: Did you or someone you know get a recent promotion? Has your book of business grown? Share a part of your day that reflects job security and income potential.)
- **Giving Back** (Example: Did you recently handle a claim that helped someone get back on their feet? Did your office give back to the community? The ways in which you help others is always a fabulous thing to share.)
- **A Routine** (Example: You start every morning by walking the dog before work, or maybe you grab a cup of coffee from a customer you insure. Share a piece of your day you never go without.)
- **Work Culture** (Example: Ability to work from anywhere? Having virtual happy hours? Share the things you love about your work culture!)
- **Your Growth** (Example: What do you do to ensure you grow professionally? Share a pic of yourself attending a virtual conference, or maybe earning CE through a webinar on your laptop.)

Here are a few examples in action!



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn



X

**A word of advice:** Remember that what you share is public and you are representing yourself, your business, and your industry.

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# 2023: OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY YEAR YET!

The victories we achieved last year will have lasting impacts on independent agencies and their customers. These accomplishments were achieved, in no small part, due to the tireless advocacy of our members and our government affairs team in Albany.

## PHOTO INSPECTION REFORM AND UNFAIR QUOTING PRACTICES LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW:

In 2023, Big I NY was successful in passing a law to allow insurance companies to waive CARCO inspections for the next four years. Based on similar initiatives in other states, we anticipate that this will reduce the number of photo inspections by over 90%, relieving customers and agents of a significant hassle. More importantly, customers will be spared from losing their comprehensive and collision coverage due to being unable to complete a photo inspection in time. This bill has been a priority for the association for over 20 years. Big I NY agents sent over 2,500 emails, signed over 1,600 petitions, made hundreds of phone calls, and held over 100 meetings with State lawmakers. This historic level of agent advocacy helped overcome numerous challenges and carried the bill to signature in November of 2023. The law will take effect on May 15th, 2024.

Also this year, Big I NY celebrated the signature of another priority law which will protect consumers from misleading quoting practices. This new law will require insurance companies to run a customer's motor vehicle report (MVR) prior to binding coverage. This will eliminate the practice of companies offering policyholders a low quote and then subsequently raising premiums later after running the insurance MVR.

## WRONGFUL DEATH EXPANSION, NON-COMPETE BAN BILL DEFEATED:

Big I NY also scored two defensive victories this year with the veto of legislation to dramatically expand the state's wrongful death law, and a bill which would have banned the use of all non-compete agreements in the state. We joined a broad-based coalition of groups representing virtually every sector of the state's economy to urge governor Hochul to veto the wrongful death expansion bill. The bill would have dramatically increased both the volume of wrongful death lawsuits, and the value of awards and settlements, which would have had a devastating effect on the economy and the insurance market. We also urged the governor to veto the non-compete ban bill on the basis that it did not include an explicit exemption for the use of non-compete agreements in the sale or purchase of a business. If this bill had been signed into law, it would be a major disruption to agency sale and acquisitions.

## MET WITH TOP OFFICIALS ON THE STATE OF THE INSURANCE MARKET:

The deteriorating state of the New York insurance market was our top concern in 2023 and remains our top concern this year. Throughout last year, Big I NY was instrumental in engaging key leaders to draw attention to the need to stabilize the state's market. We issued a dire warning and subsequently met with Executive Deputy Superintendent of Insurance John Finston of the Department of Financial Services, Senator Neil Breslin, and Assembly Member David Weprin, chairs of the Senate and assembly insurance committees respectively. Big I NY testified before the State Assembly on the impact of extreme weather events on the insurance market.



Visit Big I NY's website  
[BigINY.org/Newsfeed](https://BigINY.org/Newsfeed)  
for continued updates  
from Albany.

**BIG I**  
NEW YORK





## SECURED FAVORABLE CHANGES TO THE NEW YORK CYBER SECURITY REGULATION:

Big I NY urged the Department of Financial Services to make favorable changes to the cybersecurity regulation, such as significantly expanding the limited exemption, and creating a total exemption for inactive licensees. Both changes were included in the final amendments to the regulation released this year. But we didn't stop there - we immediately published guidance to educate members on the new requirements and the effective dates, and subsequently partnered with the Department of Financial Services to offer a comprehensive training webinar. Stay tuned for updated compliance resources all available at no charge to Big I NY members.

## HOSTED LEGISLATIVE EVENTS FOR AGENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Big I agents traveled to Washington DC to lobby our senators and members of Congress on pressing national issues such as the reauthorization of the national flood insurance program, new data privacy laws, and extension of important small business tax cuts. We also hosted legislative breakfasts in Central New York and Western New York with agents and state lawmakers from the regions.

## SET POLITICAL FUNDRAISING RECORDS:

In 2023, Big I NY members raised nearly \$57,000 for Insurpac, our federal political action committee, and nearly \$80,000 for IAPAC, our state political action committee. These funds were crucial in supporting the elections of state and federal candidates who understand and support the industry.

## BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM IN 2024 AND BEYOND:

We're not resting on our laurels. With the start of the 2024 legislative session, your team at Big I NY is already hard at work. Our government affairs team is building relationships at the Capitol in Albany, and just this week, Lisa Lounsbury, CEO of Big I NY, represented the association at a private VIP reception with governor Kathy Hochul.

## Want to get involved and help us make 2024 even more successful than last year?

- Join the Group of 100, our team of most dedicated advocacy volunteers, and join us in Albany on January 23rd for a special in-person day on the hill and private reception with state lawmakers.
- Are you interested in legislation and policy and how it affects agents and their customers? Join our Government Affairs Committee, and help us set our policy agenda.
- Help us amplify our influence in Albany and Washington DC by contributing to IAPAC and Insurpac today!
- Watch your inbox for action alert emails. These are your opportunity to contact your elected officials directly on the issues that are most important to us.

Visit Big I NY's website  
[BigINY.org/Newsfeed](https://BigINY.org/Newsfeed)  
for continued updates  
from Albany.

**BIG I**  
NEW YORK

# G100

GROUP OF ONE HUNDRED



## AGENTS LOBBY ON PRO-CONSUMER MEASURES AT NY DAY ON THE HILL

In January, members of Big I NY's Group of 100 traveled to Albany for our "Day on the Hill" to meet with state lawmakers and urge them to support proposals that will help New York consumers. The state budget process is in full swing, and Governor's recently released budget includes many proposals that will impact policyholders.

First and foremost is the dire state of New York's insurance market. Policyholders are struggling with rising rates and shrinking availability, and agents are facing new challenges obtaining coverage for their customers.

G100 members lobbied in support of common-sense changes to the recently enacted supplemental spousal liability law, including applying automatic coverage only to married insureds and exempting commercial auto policies. We also lobbied in support of a \$400+ million investment in climate resiliency efforts, including grants for improvements to properties and funding for a voluntary buyout program for flood prone properties. We urged lawmakers to support a modernization of the state's insurance verification system to help prevent drivers from being unfairly penalized for errors in the reporting of their insurance status. We lobbied for the extension of the points

reduction program which is a valuable tool to help drivers save money on their car insurance.

We strongly opposed a proposal to expand the states unfair, abusive, and deceptive acts and practices law. While well-intentioned, this expansion creates major incentives for litigation, including mandatory attorney's fees and minimum damages of \$1,000 per violation. While we agree it is crucial to protect consumers from unfair business practices, this bill is very broadly and subjectively written and is certain to invite a wave of abusive lawsuits which will increase costs to businesses, and further strain the states precarious insurance market.

After our meetings at the Capitol, we hosted a meet and greet reception with our members and members of the legislature and their staff. Agents had the opportunity to meet with their lawmakers, build new relationships, and discuss the importance and value of the independent insurance model.

G100 members had the opportunity to speak up and make a difference for their customers and the industry, while learning and having fun. Thank you to all who joined us and helped make the day a success!



# ANNUAL TECH-UP: 20 AREAS INSURANCE AGENCIES NEED TO CHECK ASAP

Written for [Catalyit.com](https://catalyit.com) | Contributors: Angela Ford and George Robertson

The calendar year is off and running. We've passed the 1/1 renewals, the craziness of the holidays, New Year's resolutions, and we're sailing. But there are some key routine tasks and processes we need to do each year to thrive, remain compliant, and increase profits. Have you done them?

Don't worry; today is the day. We have a checklist! And don't do it alone. Engage that fantastic taskmaster (you know, the one that loves lists) to help get your agency technology bases covered. Simply forward them [this list](#).

## ICYMI: Hot Topic Webinar – Tech-Up Deep Dive

Have questions on how to complete a few of the items? Don't worry, we have answers. Join Angela, George, and Steve on-demand as they help get [your agency up to speed](#).

### Budget

- Run a book of business report in AMS. Compare premium and revenue YOY. Determine/review annual sales goals.
- Determine/review technology budget. Consider a 3-5% increase.
- Review all available analytics, including balance load and referrals. Consider needed hires.
- Review all paid tech subscriptions and ensure each is still needed. Create a list of all subscriptions in one place. Note: Credit card statements are a good place to find recurring charges.

Resources: [Catalyit's Budgeting for Tech Webinar \(\\*Full Access subscribers only\)](#); [TechTips: How to Build a Strong Budget for Your Agency](#)

### Cybersecurity

- Agency cybersecurity program is up-to-date and compliant with state regulations.
- Every computer (internal & remote) has an up-to-date antivirus program running. Set a calendar reminder for renewal dates.
- Schedule awareness training for staff. Note: KnowB4 is a great tool.
- Have a data purge policy. Make sure you're following it.

Resources: [Catalyit's Cybersecurity Guide](#)

### Operations

- Perform a data integrity check: customer database has been reviewed, and duplicates removed.
- Call IT or MSP to review current Office 365 configurations and ask what should be updated.
- Check on software updates and integrations, review version numbers and latest releases. Plan to implement one or two enhancements this year.
- Change passwords on all banking accounts, AMS, and carrier portals. This should be done at least annually.
- Review who has access to carrier portals and remove unneeded access.
- Create a tech onboarding and offboarding procedure for staff to ensure system integrity. *(Maintain a list of what access each team member has and have a procedure to terminate it).*
- Printed copy and flash drive copy of disaster plan that includes contact information is offsite.
- Texting policy is in handbook for team members who text customers.
- Have on file for each customer: permission to receive policy docs electronically, & permission to receive text messages, if applicable.
- Email disclaimers and voicemail are up to date.

### Marketing

- Make sure at least 2 agency members *(including a leader)* have admin access on all social channels.
- Ensure all the links on your website are working correctly.
- Review marketing campaigns, mailers, and automated emails for updated language and the correct recipients.

Resources: [Catalyit's Marketing Guide](#)

As with most of your agency technology, it is much better not to operate in a bubble. Share this list with your team. Encourage feedback. Spread the work, and document every new process in a word document so that your team is on the same page and the heavy lift of the first time doesn't have to be repeated.

# The Cybersecurity Certification of Compliance Has Changed

Written by: Tim Dodge

Entities that the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS) will soon complete the compliance filings that the financial services cybersecurity regulation requires. This year they will notice a change.

The DFS regulates entities in the banking, financial services, and insurance sectors. These entities must submit a statement by April 15 each year about the state of their compliance with the regulation's requirements. Before this year, they had to submit a statement that they were complying with them during the prior calendar year.

An [amendment](#) to the regulation that took effect last November 1 expanded that requirement. Entities will have to complete and submit one of two forms:

- [A Certification of Material Compliance](#)
- [An Acknowledgement of Noncompliance](#)

Your agency will complete and submit the first one if it "materially complied" with the regulation's requirements during the prior calendar year. The agency must base this on records that support the conclusion.

The agency must submit the second one if it did not meet the requirements in one or more sections of the regulation that apply to it. The person completing this form must:

- Acknowledge that the agency did not "materially comply" with all the regulation's requirements during the prior year.
- Identify the sections the agency did not comply with.
- Describe what the agency failed to do and how big the failure was.
- Either affirm that the agency has since met the requirements or provide a timeline for eventual compliance.

The agency's highest-ranking executive and its chief information security officer (CISO) must sign whichever form the agency submits. If the agency does not have a CISO, the senior officer responsible for the agency's cybersecurity program must sign it instead. Most Big I New York members do not have a CISO. If the highest-ranking executive and the person responsible for cybersecurity are the same person, that person must sign it in both spaces.

Your agency must retain the documents supporting its filing for five years.

If you are one of the 92% of Big I New York members who qualify for the limited exemption, you must certify compliance or acknowledge noncompliance only with those sections of the regulation that apply to you.

Two things that have not changed:

- Your licensed employees who your agency's cybersecurity program covers do not have to submit either of these forms. They should have submitted a Notice of Exemption and given Section 500.19(b) as the reason.
- The regulation does not require the agency or its licensed employees to submit the Notice of Exemption again unless something has changed. An employee who changed employers or their name must submit a new one. So does an agency that grew too large to qualify under one of the three criteria for the limited exemption. If none of that is the case, the regulation does not require a Notice of Exemption every year. We have spoken with members who have done this unnecessary work.

More information is always available at: [biginy.org/cyber](https://biginy.org/cyber)

Other resources: [New York's Cyber Regulation is Changing. Here's What it Means for You. \(Nov. 2, 2023\)](#) | [Gear Up webinar on the amendment \(Nov. 29, 2023\)](#)



## E&O WEBSITE REVIEW

IAAC is the Member  
Services Division  
of Big I NY

### What is an E&O Website Review

Your agency website could be used against you in an E&O claim (we're seeing this happen nationwide). Our Swiss Re-approved auditor will review your website for language that puts you at risk.

### What to Expect

- After performing your insurance website review, our team will provide a report on recommended changes.
- You'll then have a 30-minute call directly with our agency consultant to discuss the results and get answers to any questions you have.
- As an added benefit, the review includes eligibility for a potential 5% premium credit on your Swiss Re E&O policy for two (2) consecutive policy terms.

This is a simple and inexpensive way to minimize your exposure to an E&O claim. Every agency should have an E&O Website Review.

### It's Easy to Get Started

- 1 Visit our website [www.biginy.org/consulting](http://www.biginy.org/consulting) and purchase the E&O Website Review, located on the E&O Website Review page under Operational Consulting. You can also scan the QR Code below.



- 2 Check your email for instructions on the process. You will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire.



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