



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

April 30, 2009

The Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt / Chairman Harkin:

As your Committees consider the FY 2010 Labor/HHS/Education bills in the coming months, **the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) urge you to make increased funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) programs a top priority.**

The LCAO is a coalition of 60 national not-for-profit organizations concerned with the well being of America's 87 million people over the age of 50. With a strong commitment to social justice and fiscal responsibility, the coalition serves as a source of information about issues affecting older persons and provides leadership and vision as America meets the challenges and opportunities presented by its aging society.

The OAA funds critical programs and services to keep older adults independent, including home-delivered (e.g., Meals On Wheels) and congregate meals, home and community-based supportive services, senior centers, family caregiver support, prevention of elder abuse, older worker training and employment, transportation, the long-term care ombudsman program, legal services, services for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, and research and training. To serve and protect older Americans who live in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, the OAA also provides funding for the long-term care ombudsman program.

Without OAA's home and community-based services, many older adults would end up requiring much more expensive institutional care or suffer unnecessarily from hunger, isolation, ill health, neglect/abuse, unemployment or other challenges to living healthfully and independently. Without the protections and advocacy provided by the ombudsman program, older adults living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities would be without recourse when subject to abuse, neglect or problems with care.

The need for these supports is great and growing. The first of the 77 million Baby Boomers are now reaching traditional retirement age. Meanwhile, the fastest growing segment of the aging population is individuals over 85, the most vulnerable older adults who tend to need long-term services and supports and whose numbers are expected to double by 2030. Increasing funding for OAA programs also supports recent state and federal initiatives to give consumers more choice in where they receive long-term services and supports.

Yet, for the past eight years, OAA programs have effectively been cut as federal funding levels have failed to keep pace with inflation or to recognize increasing demographic need. Since FY 2004, OAA appropriations have lagged behind the rising costs of fuel, commodities and wages, while demand to serve the aging population has increased, leading to a more than \$800 million shortfall.

Additionally, recent economic pressures have only magnified the situation, driving away volunteer drivers and forcing program cuts even as the need rises.

The LCAO's FY 2010 request of at least a 12 percent increase over FY 2009 levels (\$247.5 million) is based on a data-driven formula that accounts for inflation (in the form of CPI) and the growth in the older adult population for the coming year, as well as taking modest steps toward addressing the years of funding erosion and the toll it has taken on service capacity.

A significant increase in OAA funds must be provided if we are to continue the cost-effective and consumer-preferred provision of home and community-based care. The LCAO requests the following minimum funding levels for the OAA:

Department: HHS, AoA

Title II

Program Administration – \$20.9 million

Ageing Network Support – \$46.7 million, including at least \$31.4 million in additional funding to carry out the Choices for Independence initiatives in Section 202 of Title II established in the 2006 authorization

Alzheimer's disease Demonstrations – \$12.8 million

Title III

B: Supportive Services and Centers – \$404.7 million

C-1: Congregate Meals – \$486.4 million

C-2: Home Delivered Meals – \$240.2 million

Nutrition Services Incentive Program – \$180.3 million

D: Preventative Health – \$23.5 million

E: National Family Caregiver Support Program – \$172.7 million

Title IV

Program Innovations – \$20.4 million, including specific funding to carry out the new Title IV initiatives established in the 2006 authorization in the areas of transportation services; multigenerational and civic engagement activities; community planning and emergency preparedness; community innovations in aging in place; technology-based services; and the delivery of mental health screening and treatment services for older individuals, among others.

Title VI

Grants to Native American Tribes – \$30.5 million

Native American Caregivers – \$7.2 million

Title VII

Ombudsman/Elder Abuse – \$23.9 million

Department: Labor, ETA

Title V

Senior Community Service Employment Program – \$640.6 million

We are counting on your leadership to provide the funding needed to allow elders in our communities to benefit from these vital sources of support. Please do not hesitate to contact the LCAO, should you have any questions about this funding request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Retirees

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alzheimer's Association

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists

Association of Belltel Retirees, Inc.

Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America

B'Nai B'Rith International

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.

Easter Seals

Meals on Wheels Association of America

Military Officers Association of America

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

National Association for Home Care and Hospice

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Association of Retired And Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

National Association of State Units on Aging

National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Council on Aging

National Senior Citizens Law Center

NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

United Jewish Communities

Volunteers of America