



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

Barbara B. Kennelly, Chair

May 30, 2006

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Via Fax

Dear Representative:

As you determine fiscal year 2007 appropriations, the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) urge you to increase funding for the services provided through the Older Americans Act (OAA) by at least 10 percent. We also oppose cuts to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs, and support funding for Systems Change Grants, the geriatric health professions programs, and Senior Corps programs.

The **number one resolution** at the 2005 December White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA), an event held only once a decade, concerned the OAA. Bipartisan delegates from across the nation, most appointed by Governors and Members of Congress, expressed grave concerns about OAA underfunding. Congress should listen to these delegates, pay more attention to this issue, and provide the funding needed for OAA to keep frail seniors independent and productive. It would be extremely disappointing and ironic if Congress failed to provide increased funding for the top priority of WHCoA delegates just as the Final Report is issued in June.

OAA funding – which has been frozen since fiscal year 2002 – must be increased to account for inflation, increased gasoline prices, and to address the growing senior population and need for services. OAA spending saves money in the long run. Inadequate funding has resulted in expensive, premature institutionalization and waiting lists for many supportive services. Nutritional services help avert malnutrition and control chronic conditions such as diabetes. The OAA funds critical programs and services to keep older adults independent, including Meals On Wheels and congregate meals, senior center services, home and community-based care, family caregiver support, protection against elder abuse and neglect, older worker training and employment, transportation, and legal services. **We urge you to increase OAA funding by at least 10 percent.**

In addition, we also urge you to consider the following recommendations:

- Oppose cuts to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program. Over one-third of SSBG funds provide services to older adults, including home-based services, protections against abuse and neglect, nutrition services, adult day care and transportation. Adequate funding of SSBG is vital to the aging network's success in serving frail, vulnerable seniors.
- Oppose cuts to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program. Such reductions would jeopardize important senior center and nutrition services to older Americans.
- Continue funding for System Change Grants, which promote state innovations to enable seniors and persons with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities, thus providing greater independence and choice.
- Restore funding for the geriatric health professions program, contained in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. As we face a worsening shortage in the geriatric workforce, these programs leverage funding to provide training to geriatricians and other geriatric providers.

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- Increase funding for Senior Corps programs to create volunteer opportunities for a greater number of older Americans and allow communities to tap the vast resources of their lifetime experience in meeting needs throughout the country.

Thank you for considering our views on behalf of America's seniors.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Retiree Program
Alliance for Retired Americans
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Geriatrics Society
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Gray Panthers
Meals On Wheels Association of America
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Foster Grandparent Program Directors
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc.
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
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 Hispanic Council on Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Senior Citizens Law Center
United Jewish Communities