March 9, 2007

The Honorable Dave Obey, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
H-218 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Walsh, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
H-218 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
S-131 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
S-131 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh / Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

As your Committees consider the FY 2008 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 programs a high priority. These programs are a sound investment of federal resources, because they respond to older adults’ desire to age in their own homes and communities, and they are more cost effective than institutional care.

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) is a coalition of national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America’s older population and committed to representing their interest in the policy-making arena. Our 54 members offer expertise and advocacy on a broad range of issues affecting the elderly and those who care for them. We focus on ensuring social justice and fiscal responsibility for an aging society.

The LCAO opposes the President’s budget proposal to eliminate the Title III D Preventive Services program and the Alzheimer’s demonstration grants and to dramatically reduce funding for the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program. This proposal would cut Older Americans Act funding by a total of $109 million, or 6 percent. At a time when these programs are needed more than ever before, we believe funding should be significantly increased, not eliminated or reduced.

The OAA funds critical programs and services to keep seniors independent and productive, including Meals On Wheels and congregate meals, home and community-based care, 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. For years, OAA funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals eligible for services, yet demand by at-risk older adults in need of supportive services has risen and will only continue to rise with the growth in the aging population.

In September 2006, Congress reauthorized the Older Americans Act adding several new initiatives to the existing responsibilities of the aging services network in the areas of community innovations in aging in place, transportation services, multigenerational and civic engagement activities, technology-based services, benefits outreach and counseling, community planning and emergency preparedness, and the delivery of mental health screening and treatment services for older individuals, among others. Congress also reauthorized Title V of the OAA, emphasizing the program’s dual mission to provide community services and employment training for older workers.
Now, the Congress must provide adequate funding for the core OAA programs as well as the new initiatives under the 2006 reauthorization. The LCAO supports an increase of at least 10 percent in FY 2008 for all OAA programs (above FY 2007 levels) to account for inflation over the last several years and address the growing senior population and demand for services. The LCAO requests the following minimum funding levels for the OAA:

**Department HHS, AoA**

**Title II**

Program Administration – $19.4 million, plus additional funding to carry out the new initiatives in Section 202 of Title II established in the 2006 authorization

**Title III**

Supportive Services and Centers – $385.6 million
Congregate Meals – $438.8 million
Home Delivered Meals – $207.1 million
Nutrition Services Incentive Program – $162.6 million
Preventative Health – $23.5 million
National Family Caregiver Support Program – $171.7 million, plus additional funding for the newly eligible populations included in the 2006 authorization – caregivers of adult children with disabilities, caregivers of persons with dementia of any age, and grandparents age 55 and older caring for grandchildren

**Title IV**

Program Innovations – $35.4 million, including $28 million for the Choices for Independence initiative, plus additional funding to carry out the new Title IV initiatives established in the 2006 authorization
Aging Network Support – $14.4 million
Alzheimer’s Initiative – $12.8 million

**Title VI**

Grants to Native American Tribes – $28.7 million
Native American Caregivers – $6.8 million

**Title VII**

Ombudsman/Elder Abuse – $22.3 million

**Department of Labor, ETA**

**Title V**

Senior Community Service Employment Program – $531.9 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 Retiree Program
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer’s Association
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Geriatrics Society
American Postal Workers Union Retirees
American Public Health Association
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores/National Association for Hispanic Elderly
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
B’nai B’rith International
Experience Works
Families USA
The Gerontological Society of America
Gray Panthers
International Union, United Auto Workers
Meals On Wheels Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.
NCCNHR
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council On Aging
National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
United Jewish Communities

cc: Members of the House and Senate Labor/HHS/Education Subcommittees