



William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

July 14, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) are writing today to urge you to adopt a balanced approach to addressing the nation's deficit and to protect low- and middle-income elders who rely on core social insurance and community-based services and supports. As the budget negotiations move forward, we are extremely concerned about elements of a possible deal that would undermine the health and economic security of older Americans. We believe the nation can and should reduce the deficit over time through a *balanced* approach that includes budget savings from increases in revenue and thoughtful, targeted reductions in spending when and where necessary.

The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations believes these principles should guide any negotiation to address the budget gap:

1. **Establish BALANCE:** In addressing the annual deficit and accumulated national debt, any budget agreement must adopt a *balanced approach*, including revenue raisers, as well as savings from mandatory and discretionary spending which yields the resources necessary to address national needs, reduce the deficit and retire debt.
2. **Protect the most VULNERABLE:** Any budget agreement must protect those older adults (and ALL Americans) in greatest need, both socially and economically, by fairly balancing budget resources against sacrifices, protecting low-income Americans and, ultimately, taking no actions that increase economic vulnerability or poverty.
3. **Preserve delicate economic recovery:** Any budget agreement must be sensitive to the impact of the current economic downturn, which demands budget solutions that stabilize both the American economy and the budgets of low- and middle-income American families, in line with the economic situation of working and retired older Americans.

4. **Build a better future:** Any budget agreement should be developed with the overarching goal of building economic security for Americans of all ages, strengthening the middle class and promoting job growth.
5. **Address system wide health care inflation:** Any budget agreement must not reduce government spending by shifting higher costs on to consumers, to states or single out Medicare and Medicaid. Rather, in building on the cost savings and efficiencies of the Affordable Care Act, an agreement must reduce the rate of increase in federal health spending by addressing the systemic causes of health care inflation that are the root cause of rising costs in federal health programs.
6. **Maintain federal role to protect consumers from devastating health costs:** In addressing the nation's rising health care costs -- and their growing share of federal budget expenditures -- any budget agreement must protect consumers and maintain the federal government's authority to determine eligibility and consumer protections for federal programs serving older adults and those with disabilities, particularly those living on low, fixed incomes. For example, Medicaid block grants and Medicare privatization in the form of vouchers or premium support, must be averted.
7. **Reject arbitrary caps and triggers:** Any budget agreement must avoid resorting to automatic, arbitrary spending caps and sequestration mechanisms which deny legislators the opportunity to set priorities in the allocation of tax dollars, now and in the future.
8. **Ensure flexibility to protect low-income Americans:** In developing a long-term deficit reduction plan, any budget agreement should protect income and supports and social insurance programs for low-income Americans. Congress must not be constrained from negotiating balanced strategies that include revenue raisers and, where necessary, spending cuts.

We invite a conversation between federal policymakers, LCAO member organizations and their networks of experienced leaders, practitioners, and volunteers. The challenges we face are great, and we must rise to these challenges with solutions that represent the best of who we are as a nation and who we aspire to be.

Sincerely,

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Vice President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

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Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

July 14, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Office of the Speaker
H-232 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

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July 14, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Office of the Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

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Office of the Republican Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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