



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

*William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair*

March 9, 2007

The Honorable Charles Rangel, Chair  
The Honorable Jim McCrery, Ranking Member  
Ways and Means Committee  
1101 Longworth Building  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Michael R. McNulty  
The Honorable Sam Johnson, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Social Security  
1101 Longworth Building  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel, Ranking Member McCrery, Chairman McNulty, Ranking Member Johnson:

As you develop the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution, the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations urge you to include full funding for the administrative expenses of the Social Security Administration. This funding is essential to address serious backlogs at the agency, to enable it to meet its new responsibilities under Medicare Part D, and to sustain Social Security as a crucial and needed lifeline for millions of Americans.

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 interests in the policy making process. Our 54 members engage in resource sharing and joint advocacy on a range of issues affecting older persons. All told, LCAO members touch more than 134 million Americans through service provision and advocacy.

At the end of FY 2006, there were 1.3 million people awaiting a decision on their initial claim or appeal for Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. The agency is understaffed and is having difficulty retaining the staff it currently has. As a result, the average processing time for hearings has increased dramatically from 308 days in FY 2001 to 524 days in FY 2007. The \$9.597 billion that President Bush requested for SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses budget will not address the increasing backlogs or the inadequate staffing levels. If the President's budget is adopted, staffing would decline by more than 8% from the FY 2006 level.

SSA's workload has grown significantly due to the large number of retirees and new requirements under Medicare and Homeland Security legislation. For the past four years, the President's budget proposal has been lower than the SSA Commissioner's request. For FY 2008 the Commissioner asked for \$10.44 billion - \$843 million above the President's request. Furthermore, Congress has consistently funded SSA even below the level of the President's request, mainly because SSA has to compete for funds with other needed programs under the Labor - HHS Appropriations bill.

We urge the inclusion of special provisions in the budget resolution specifically to address the backlog issue. We would like to see funding provided up to the level of the Commissioner's request and additional funding specifically for Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs) and SSI redeterminations. This is the only way that SSA can make progress toward working down the disability claims backlog. CDRs and SSI redeterminations actually produce significant savings. Therefore, there would be no increase in the deficit.

Chairman Rangel, Ranking Member McCrery  
Chairman McNulty, Ranking Member Johnson  
March 9, 2007  
Page2

Please allow the SSA to be fully funded next year, including provisions to address the backlogs. Your older and disabled constituents and their families are counting on you.

Sincerely,

*AARP*  
*AFL-CIO*  
*AFSCME Retiree Program*  
*Alliance for Retired Americans*  
*American Association for International Aging*  
*American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging*  
*American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement & Retirees*  
*American Society of Consultant Pharmacists*  
*American Society on Aging*  
*Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores/National Association for Hispanic Elderly*  
*Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America*  
*B'nai B'rith International*  
*International Union, United Auto Workers*  
*Military Officers Association of America*  
*National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys*  
*National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers*  
*National Association of Social Workers (NASW)*  
*National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs*  
*National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.*  
*National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform*  
*National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare*  
*National Senior Citizens Law Center*  
*OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women*  
*United Jewish Communities*

cc: House Budget Committee