



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

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

June 8, 2011

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
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

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro /Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

As your Committees consider the FY 2012 Labor/HHS appropriations bills in the coming months, the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) urge you to make investments in the Older Americans Act (OAA) a top priority.

LCAO is a coalition of 66 national not-for-profit organizations concerned with the well-being of older Americans. 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. 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 independently with good health and economic security.

The need for OAA programs among older adults and caregivers could not be greater than during these difficult economic times. There are now nearly 39 million Americans over the age of 65, or approximately 13% of the total U.S. population. The first of the 77 million Baby Boomers turn 65 this year. Demographic trends indicate at least 300,000 more seniors will be living in poverty in FY 2012. This is particularly alarming for senior nutrition and senior employment programs. Senior hunger continues to grow, while the cost of food and fuel rapidly increases, leading to a staggering 20% increase in senior hunger in the past decade. In addition, older adults 55 and older continue to struggle with employment, with a 2010 reemployment rate of 38%, the lowest of any age group. 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. As older Americans live longer, but with economic and health challenges, and as they and their caregivers continue to struggle in this economy, the bedrock programs supported by the OAA are even more essential.

Despite this obviously growing need, OAA programs have been cut as federal funding levels have failed to keep pace with inflation or the growth in our aging population. Since FY 2004, OAA appropriations have lagged behind the rising costs of fuel, commodities and wages, while demand to serve older Americans has increased, leading to a substantial and growing shortfall. Programs are struggling to keep the pace of need due to these lagging appropriations, as well as severe funding cuts. In fiscal year 2010, the \$375 million cut from the Senior Community Service Employment Program, the only federal workforce program targeted for older workers, was larger than the amount in the much larger Workforce Investment Act.

In order for OAA funding to simply catch up with the growth in the senior population and the costs of services over the past decade, it would have to increase by at least 12%.

We are cognizant of the new pressures on federal spending levels. There are few better investments you can make than in these cost-effective programs that are so needed by millions of older adults. Furthermore, investing in OAA initiatives saves taxpayer dollars by reducing premature or costly Medicaid and Medicare expenditures as a result of unnecessary nursing home placement or poor management of nutrition and chronic health conditions.

In addition to an overall increase needed to address inflation and the growth of the aging population, we support:

- An additional \$48 million for OAA Title IIIB supportive services and centers, \$38 million for the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and \$2 million for the Native American caregiver program as proposed in the Administration's Caregiver Initiative;
- An increase of \$5 million for the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program as well as first time federal funding of \$16.5 million for Adult Protective Services, included in investments proposed in the bipartisan Elder Justice Act;
- Restoration of funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program, Title V of OAA, to \$600.4 million, and
- An increase of \$44 million for OAA Title III C1 congregate meals; an increase of \$22 million for OAA Title III C2, home delivered meals; and an increase of \$8 million for the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP).

While we understand the difficult fiscal constraints under which you are operating, we hope you will make every effort in FY 2012 to prevent the erosion of—and invest in the future of—the innovative and cost-effective Older Americans Act programs, which support older adults to live at home and in the community for as long as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact the LCAO, at e-mail [LCAO@LeadingAge.org](mailto:LCAO@LeadingAge.org), or at (202) 783-2242, should you have any questions about this funding request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Retired Americans  
Alzheimer's Foundation of America  
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (AGHDHBCU)  
Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc.  
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. (CMA)  
Easter Seals  
Experience Works

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)  
The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)  
LeadingAge  
Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)  
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)  
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)  
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)  
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM)  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)  
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)  
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD)  
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc. (NARSVPD)  
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc. (NCBA)  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)  
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
National Council on Aging (NCOA)  
National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA)  
National Osteoporosis Foundation  
National Senior Corps Association (NSCA)  
OWL-The Voice of Midlife and Older Women  
PHI – Quality Care *through* Quality Jobs  
Senior Service America, Inc.  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

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