



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

November 10, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor/HHS/Education
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor/HHS/Education
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), thank you for your efforts to more adequately fund the programs that help older Americans get the support they need to age successfully at home and in their community. To that end, **we appreciate the increases to Older Americans Act programs and services that your subcommittees included in your respective FY 2009 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bills.**

LCAO is a coalition of 56 national not-for-profit organizations concerned with the well-being of American's 87 million people over 50. 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.

When the new Congress convenes in January, we hope that they will be able to pick up where this Congress left off — and finish the FY 2009 Labor/HHS/Education spending bill at the highest possible levels for Older Americans Act programs and services, which are detailed below. Recent economic pressures have only exacerbated an already strained situation, with the aging services network struggling to meet the needs of current elders, even as new clients seek assistance in ever-greater numbers — increased federal funding is essential now, more than ever.

As you know, the Older Americans Act (OAA) is the backbone of the nation's long-term care system, providing older adults with much needed services that include home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, case management, transportation, caregiver support programs, legal services and long-term care ombudsmen, among other essential services.

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. Recent price increases for food and fuel have further compounded the problem.

We urge Congress to finalize the FY 2009 OAA funding levels in the following way.

- **Support the Senate-proposed funding levels for:**
 - Title II: Aging Network Support (\$43.692 million)
 - Title III C1: Congregate Meals (\$434.269 million)
 - Title III C: Nutrition Services Incentive Program (\$162.207 million)

- Title III E: The National Family Caregiver Support Program (\$155 million)
- Title VII Ombudsman/Elder Abuse Prevention programs (\$22.133 million)

▪ **Support the House-proposed funding levels for:**

- Title III C2: Home-Delivered Meals (\$218.226 million)
- Title IV: Aging Research and Training (\$20.886 million)
- Title VI: Native American aging programs
 - Part A (\$27.517 million)
 - Part C, Caregivers (\$6.461 million)

▪ **Retain the Senate *and* House-proposed funding for:**

- Title III B Supportive Services and Centers (\$361.348 million)
- Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program under the Department of Labor (\$571.925 million)
- Choices for Independence activities (nursing home diversion, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and evidence-based disease prevention) (\$28 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. Thank you.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Retirees

Alliance for Aging Research

Alzheimer's Association

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

American Foundation for the Blind

American Geriatrics Society

American Society of Consultant Pharmacists

Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc.

American Society on Aging

Easter Seals

Experience Works

Meals On Wheels Association of America

Military Officers Association of America

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

National Alliance for Caregiving

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging

National Association for Home Care & Hospice

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Council on Aging

National Indian Council on Aging

National Osteoporosis Foundation

National Senior Corps Association

NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

United Jewish Communities

Volunteers of America