



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

November 13, 2006

Sent Via Fax

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Benjamin Cardin, Philip English, Jim McDermott, Xavier Becerra:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) urge you to provide relief to refugees and asylees who face economic peril. Each year there are an increasing number of elderly and disabled refugees and asylees who are losing their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits upon the expiration of their seven year SSI eligibility period because, through no fault of their own, they are unable to complete the naturalization process and become citizens within that time frame. The Social Security Administration estimates that 4,500 people will lose their benefits for this reason this year. They are people who are far less likely than most immigrants to have a family support network to fall back on and are among the most vulnerable of SSI recipients. Many came to this country to escape religious, ethnic or political persecution in their native land and now have to face the prospect of serious deprivation in their adopted homeland. In most states, the loss of SSI will also mean the loss of Medicaid. Thus, in addition to losing their financial assistance, they will lose their access to medical care.

We know that you are sensitive to the needs of this population as evidenced by your sponsorship of the SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act (H.R. 899), which would extend the period of refugee eligibility for SSI for an additional two years. We urge you to adopt as a high priority the inclusion of such an extension in the year end omnibus appropriations bill when Congress returns after the elections.

The rationale for the seven year time limit may have had some validity when it was first enacted insofar as it was premised on the idea that seven years was sufficient time for people to complete the process of becoming a citizen. However, in the post-9/11 environment with greatly increased delays on the road to naturalization, far more time is required to complete the process. There are quotas on the number of asylees who can become permanent residents. This delays the start of the five year waiting period for permanent residents applying for citizenship. Unless action is taken in this Congress, another 4,500 people will lose their SSI benefits this year, with many losing associated health care benefits as well. This is a crisis which can and should be averted.

We are grateful for the support that you have given to this most vulnerable population and urge you to do all within your power to see to it that relief in the form of an extension of the SSI eligibility period is provided in this Congress. Thank you for your assistance in this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

*AFL-CIO
AFSCME Retiree Program
Alliance for Retired Americans*

American Association for International Aging
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society on Aging
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black Colleges and Universities
B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Families USA
Gray Panthers
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors, Inc
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
United Jewish Communities



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

William (Larry) Minnix, Jr., Chair

November 13, 2006

Sent Via Fax

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Gordon Smith, Herb Kohl, Sam Brownback:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) urge you to provide relief to refugees and asylees who face economic peril. Each year there are an increasing number of elderly and disabled refugees and asylees who are losing their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits upon the expiration of their seven year SSI eligibility period because, through no fault of their own, they are unable to complete the naturalization process and become citizens within that time frame. The Social Security Administration estimates that 4,500 people will lose their benefits for this reason this year. They are people who are far less likely than most immigrants to have a family support network to fall back on and are among the most vulnerable of SSI recipients. Many came to this country to escape religious, ethnic or political persecution in their native land and now have to face the prospect of serious deprivation in their adopted homeland. In most states, the loss of SSI will also mean the loss of Medicaid. Thus, in addition to losing their financial assistance, they will lose their access to medical care.

We know that you are sensitive to the needs of this population as evidenced by your sponsorship of the SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act (S. 453), which would extend the period of refugee eligibility for SSI for an additional two years. We urge you to adopt as a high priority the inclusion of such an extension in the year end omnibus appropriations bill when Congress returns after the elections.

The rationale for the seven year time limit may have had some validity when it was first enacted insofar as it was premised on the idea that seven years was sufficient time for people to complete the process of becoming a citizen. However, in the post-9/11 environment with greatly increased delays on the road to naturalization, far more time is required to complete the process. There are quotas on the number of asylees who can become permanent residents. This delays the start of the five year waiting period for citizenship. Unless action is taken in this Congress, another 4,500 people will lose their SSI benefits this year, with many losing associated health care benefits as well. This is a crisis which can and should be averted.

We are grateful for the support that you have given to this most vulnerable population and urge you to do all within your power to see to it that relief in the form of an extension of the SSI eligibility period is provided in this Congress. Thank you for your assistance in this urgent matter.

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