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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Aging Coalition Urges Policymakers: Don't Reduce the Deficit on the Backs of Seniors in Need**

*Organizations Call for Balanced Approach to Deficit Reduction*

**Washington, D.C. (December 13, 2012)**—The Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO)—who together represent over 60 million older Americans—today expressed grave concerns about proposed cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, the Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA), and discretionary programs like the Older Americans Act as part of the emerging budget agreement.

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) leads the LCAO, which is a coalition of 68 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population.

“Seniors have an enormous stake in the current budget discussions. Proposals on so-called ‘entitlement reform’ are likely to mean slashing programs that help seniors in need and that they paid into throughout their working years,” said James Firman, NCOA president and LCAO chair. “Cutting benefits or shifting costs onto vulnerable seniors through drastic cuts to Medicare and the Social Security COLA are unfair, unnecessary, and bad policy. They would seriously harm millions of seniors—half of whom have incomes below \$22,000.”

LCAO is urging Congress and the Administration to adopt a balanced approach to deficit reduction that includes increases in revenue and targeted cuts that do not increase poverty. It is calling for a budget agreement that builds economic security for older Americans and their families, strengthens the middle class, and promotes job growth.

In particular, LCAO members are concerned with the following proposals now being discussed:

**Medicare and Medicaid:** The level and nature of Medicare and Medicaid cuts being considered raise grave concerns. The focus should be on reducing the rate of increase in federal health spending by addressing the systemic causes of health care inflation, not shifting costs onto consumers or jeopardizing access to needed care. Medicare households already spend an average of 15% of their incomes on health care (compared to just 5% among under 65 households).



**Social Security COLA:** A proposed new formula for calculating the annual COLA for people with Social Security and Supplemental Security Income would permanently—and immediately—cut this basic safety net for generations of retirees and the disabled, many of whom are barely paying their bills right now. According to the Social Security Chief Actuary, the so-called “chained CPI” formula would reduce annual benefits for a typical 65-year-old by about \$130 per year.

**Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) Programs:** Programs like the Older Americans Act, Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program help millions of older adults maintain their health and stay in their own homes. These vital programs already have been cut by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. Additional cuts would severely limit services and likely force more vulnerable seniors into costly institutional care.

The LCAO made these points and more to both Congress and the Administration in a letter sent today. For additional information, including a copy of the letter, please visit [www.lcao.org](http://www.lcao.org).

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#### **About NCOA**

*The National Council on Aging is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCOA is a national voice for millions of older adults—especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged—and the community organizations that serve them. It brings together nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults. NCOA works with thousands of organizations across the country to help seniors find jobs and benefits, improve their health, live independently, and remain active in their communities. For more information, please visit: [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org) | [www.facebook.com/NCOAging](https://www.facebook.com/NCOAging) | [www.twitter.com/NCOAging](https://www.twitter.com/NCOAging)*