



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

October 8, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

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

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt and Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), which represents 629 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and 244 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S, 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.

n4a, our member agencies and the millions of elders they serve, appreciate the increases to the Older Americans Act programs and services that your committees included in your respective FY 2010 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bills. As you finalize this bill, we urge you to enact the highest possible funding levels for Older Americans Act programs and services and other critical programs that benefit older adults, which are detailed below.

Recent economic pressures have only exacerbated an already strained situation, with agencies 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, care management, legal services, transportation and caregiver support programs,

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among other essential services. AAAs and Title VI aging programs have coordinated these services at the local level for more than 35 years.

We urge Congress to support the following FY 2010 OAA funding levels.

- The House and Senate-proposed funding of \$44.28 million allotted under **Aging Network Support Activities**, including \$30.58 million for **Administration on Aging health and long-term care initiatives** (Aging and Disability Resource Centers [ADRCs], evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention, and nursing home diversion programs).
- The House-proposed funding for **Title III B Supportive Services and Centers** (\$371.3 million), which would provide an increase of \$10 million for a range of supportive services including emergency assistance; senior transportation, especially critical medical transportation; senior centers; care management, benefits counseling; and in-home services, which help older adults avoid premature institutionalization.
- The House-proposed funding levels for the **Title III C1: Congregate Meals** (\$447.2 million) and **C2: Home-Delivered Meals Program** (\$220.8 million).
- The House-proposed funding level for the **Title IV: Aging Research and Training** programs (\$21.1 million). We also support the Senate Committee's report language encouraging the funding of **Section 416, Technical Assistance and Innovation to Improve Transportation for Older Americans** program. We are enthusiastic that the Committee's support will translate into grant funding that will support the development of innovative approaches for improving access by older adults to transportation services and improve the coordination of transportation services funded under the OAA with other community transportation programs.
- The House-proposed funding level for the **Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program under the Department of Labor** (\$615.4 million), which provides an increase of \$43.5 million to allow Title V programs to serve more than 5,000 additional seniors, while the overall program will provide community service opportunities for nearly 100,000 low-income seniors in program year 2010. This increase will be particularly important as local Title V programs continue to assist unemployed older workers dealing with the effects of the economic downturn.
- The House-proposed modest funding increase for the **Title VI Native American** aging programs (\$28.2 million), including a \$1 million increase for Part A—Grants. The House and Senate proposed identical funding levels for Part B—Caregiver programs (\$6.38 million). OAA provides the primary authority for funding services to elders in Indian country, who are among the most economically disadvantaged elderly minority in the nation.
- The Senate-proposed funding increase for the **Title VII Ombudsman/Elder Abuse** program (\$22.38 million).

n4a also supports the following other funding levels under the Labor/HHS/Education bill, including the House and Senate's dedication of \$2.5 million to the **Lifespan Respite Care Act**; the House

funding level for the **Community Services Block Grant** at \$746 million; the House's \$45 million for **Medicare outreach and education** through State Health Insurance Assistance Programs; and **Social Services Block Grant** spending of \$1.7 billion, as recommended by both House and Senate.

We are counting on your strong leadership to provide the funding needed to allow elders in our communities to benefit from these vital sources of support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Markwood". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Sandy Markwood
Chief Executive Officer

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