

WORKFORCE³ONE

TRANSCRIPT OF WEBINAR

TITLE V REAUTHORIZATION: A JOINT LISTENING SESSION

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GARY GONZALEZ: Again, my name is Gary Gonzalez. I'll be here throughout today's listening session, providing any technical support should you need it, but I am confident that you won't. So with that, I'm going to turn things over now to Grace Kilbane, administrator here at the Employment Training Administration. Grace.

GRACE KILBANE: Yeah. Thank you, Gary. And I also want to join in welcoming all of you for joining us on our Title V listening session today. And it is my pleasure really to have the opportunity to introduce our co-hosts, really, of this Title V joint listening session.

We're privileged to have Kathy Greenlee who is the assistant secretary for aging at the Department of Health and Human Services, who is joined by Jane Oates, who is the Assistant Secretary for Employment Training here at the Department of Labor. And first, Assistant Secretary Greenlee is going to give some opening remarks and that will be then – and she will then be followed by Assistant Secretary Oates. So let me turn it over.

KATHY GREENLEE: Thank you, Grace. Good to see you again. Nice to be doing this with Jane. I just wanted to provide a context on where this whole timeline and sequence with regards to the work that we've been doing on the Older Americans Act.

I started in my position as assistant secretary at the very beginning of July and started talking about reauthorization the same day. We have seen this coming and known that we wanted to have a very open process with the various stakeholders and providers so that we can get some good input from around the country.

So in December, I drafted some colleagues to come in and visit with me and I just want to name them. I had Martha Roherty from the National Association of State Units on Aging come over, Sandy Markwood with the National Area Agency on Aging Association (sic), Jim Furman with National Council on Aging, Bob Blancato with NANASP, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers, as well as Enid Borden with Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Those five partners are critical to us in terms of outreach to the network and the services that we provide under the Older Americans Act. And I wanted to go through a process so that we could coordinate our work and get good input. With their, kind of, counsel, we came up with a series of listening sessions. We had a listening session in Dallas, one in Alexandria, one in San Francisco and then we attended the National Council on Aging conference in Chicago in March.

We also put some information on our website at AOA.gov. The opportunity for individuals to comment specifically on the Older Americans Act, as well as for organizations to do local events, whether it's a board meeting or a community event, so that we could get some input in a broader way.

All of those efforts have paid off and we have received 500 comments – around 500 comments with regard to reauthorization. And at every turn, we have mentioned Title V, both in the listening sessions that I did in person and in the structure of the content on the website, knowing that this is a combined project between the Department of Labor and HHS.

We wanted to make sure that we were responsive and could at least accept the comments about Title V. And we've had several. So my commitment has been to work with Jane to bring her the Title V comments and so I came over to see you and say, oh, by the way, I've been talking about Title V – (laughter) – thought you'd want to know.

And it was really at Jane's suggestion that she host a webinar that we do this jointly so that we could show a united front to get input and find a way that we can make the program as strong as possible to serve both the aging network and the seniors, the older workers. So thank you for hosting us, Jane. We will give you all of our comments and they'll be coming soon.

I might also just say that this work for us very much coincides with the work we're doing on the 2012 budget, so people are encouraged to get those comments as soon as they can because we're in the development stages of that.

JANE OATES: Well, thank you. It's so great to be doing this. Grace, Gary, thank you so much for setting this up. Kathy, we didn't know each other before, but I think that I could say to all of you, Kathy is such a pleasure to work with and you've mentioned you know that better than I. This is definitely going to be a team effort. It's going to be transparent and we hope that today you operate with the same frankness in your questions and in your suggestions as I hope you're hearing from Kathy and I today.

SCSEP is an important program for us. While we – (inaudible) – and cherish our senior workers, SCSEP is our only dedicated program funding for senior workers that are low-income. It is a program that has great interest both in communities and inside the beltway and one that we care deeply about. We will listen attentively, we'll try to get some good work and we'll make every – this, of course, will be public. But as we move forward with other recommendations, we'll also make those public.

One thing I did want to bring up as a disclaimer: The final rule for the 2006 amendment will be released later, I think, either late in April or early in May. By law we are not allowed to discuss that rule until it's published. So please, we don't want to leave any questions unanswered, but if people do ask us about that final rule, we are unable to comment on it until we get the publication out there. With that, look forward to your questions and comments and we're here waiting for you. Thank you very much.

MS. KILBANE: Good, thank you very much, both to Assistant Secretary Greenlee and Assistant Secretary Oates. As we said at the beginning of this listening session, you know, we're here to hear from you and we're really looking very broadly at the three key areas that are listed up on the screen starting with, you know, what is effective in the current '05 law that many of

you are working on? What aspects of that do you find that are not effective and importantly on both aspects, what innovations can you suggest?

So we are looking at, as Gary said at the outset, accepting comments in a number of different ways. First of all, we'll be looking at phoned-in comments, which will ask you to start and Gary's going to give you the dial-in instructions in a minute. These will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. We ask you to keep your comments to three minutes or less so that we can accommodate as many people who want to participate and make comments today.

Also, as we said at the outset – and I note that we already have several comments that have come in – that the chat comments may be entered any time during the session, as Gary discussed, in the chat box. Also, we – the Department of Labor – we have designated a mailbox to receive comments both now and after this listening session. And the address is right there for that website: TitleVlisteningsession@dol.gov. We also will be working with the Agency on Aging (sic) and please visit their website, which again, is listed on the screen, to comment on other titles of the Older Americans Act.

Neither department currently has a proposal for reauthorizing this on the table, which is why Assistant Secretary Greenlee planned these listening sessions and now I have been joined by – also doing Title V – Assistant Secretary Oates at the Employment and Training Administration. And that's why it's so important for us to hear from you today. This is an open process and we want as much participation as we can get.

As it says in its title, this is a listening session, which means that we're really not looking at discussing reauthorization per se, either the Older Americans Act or WIA reauthorization or questions on upcoming appropriations proposal. But we will certainly want to hear from you across any and all of these – all of your suggestions and comments.

With that, I'm going to ask Gary to review the dial-in instructions on how you can start getting queued up on the phone lines and then we'll start taking a look at the comments.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thanks, Grace. If you're wanting to jump in on the teleconference line, press 7 on your phone's keypad to record your name, go ahead and so. I'm going to reiterate what Grace has said. We'll try to – if you want to try to keep your comments to about three minutes, remaining respectful of others who want to jump on the line.

Again, you're going to have that chat feature. If you want to look at your screen, if you want to use that at any point to submit your comments, please feel free. Although we've already got some of your comments already in queue, which we'll take some of those comments first so we can let the phone queue build up. So Grace, I'll turn things back to you so we can take some of the comments that were submitted via the chat or to Kathy or Jane whenever you're ready.

MS. KILBANE: Great. Thank you, Gary. We do have about a half a dozen or so comments that have come in. One of them was talking a little bit about the urgency in finding older adults training opportunities. And there's not much more there, so if anyone out there that made that

comment could add a little bit more to, you know, what does that mean that you are feeling urgent in finding older adults training opportunities?

We also have a number of other comments up there, one of which is saying that the current community service hosts – (inaudible) – training provides supplemental wages to participants to help them stay self-sufficient while in training. And thinking of that as something that is effective right now with the program.

There's some concerns, though, that were raised – and not effective in terms of staffing and funding, although, of course, the SCSEP programs have been – has received quite a large shot of additional resources this year. I guess I would ask either one of our assistant secretaries, if any comments that have come in, would you like some further clarification or any thoughts that you might have on that.

MS. OATES: I think there were a few, I think, two questions here about the Workforce Investment Act that I see. I'm not quite sure why people wouldn't be automatically eligible for WIA services. They're disadvantaged adults, so if the person who asked that question recognized SCSEP participants as automatically eligible for the Workforce Investment Act could clarify that a little bit, there is – everyone – it's a universal system; everyone can go in. But because of their status as disadvantaged adults, they would be given priority under that program. And I'm not quite sure how we can get that better focused.

There was another question on the fact that in SCSEP, there's not enough administrative funds to pay for a position to be a job developer. That might be a place where the one-stop could help and talk to people about positions that are open, especially at community-based organizations where they may be able to be a leader for you to get in and get some conversations there.

The other piece that was kind of a question in my mind is the durational limit. Someone asked, the durational limits may not be enough time. My understanding is you have up to 48 months – and I need to say that I'm not sure that we can go to Congress and say that we can't get people placed in something in four years. So if that person is working under a disadvantaged – that question – if they're working under a different timeline other than 48 months, maybe we should talk about that because this 48-month one is the only timeline that I'm aware of.

And of course, Kathy, you like that last one that says –

MS. GREENLEE: Yeah.

MS. OATES: You want to address that?

MS. GREENLEE: Well, yeah. There is a comment that's come in that is similar to what I heard when I was doing the public listening sessions was at least advancing the suggestion that perhaps we might want to move the oversight of Title V to the Administration on Aging rather than here at the Department of Labor, thinking that we may be more responsive to the needs and preferences of older workers.

I know I got this comment on the road quite a bit and I had people say I think we should move it back to AOA. To be clear, it never was with the Administration on Aging. This Title V has always been administered by the Department of Labor. And my goal – and I think that’s reflected by being here – is that we work with the Department of Labor to address the joint needs that we have.

I mean, this is a community service program and an employment program. And those fall within different fields in terms of kind of matching those two things up so they’re supportive of Department of Labor’s initiatives as well as supportive of ours. So I would always prefer that we find ways to make programs more effective and efficient rather than reorganizing government. I have seen government reorganization not achieve the goal when what we need to do is look at what the common goals are. So I’m very glad to be here working with Jane and her staff at ETA to try to figure that out.

MS. OATES: And again, I want to be very frank on this one. If our working together doesn’t improve the operational aspects of the program and the outcomes for the individuals, I think we would all be open to look at moving this to AOA if that were the way we had to go in order to get improved outcomes.

I mean, clearly, AOA is the high watermark with understanding the needs of older Americans. We like to hope in ETA that we’re the high watermark on understanding the needs of the workplace. And if we can’t marry those to the satisfaction of the community, then I think we have to be open to all suggestions. There’s no turf war here.

First, I think our first aim is to make sure we’re operating this program as closely as possible with our partners at AOA and to improve our functioning in this program. And we’ll let the community be the judge on that because I think if we are not able to do that, we should not, you know, retain – we should be open with Congress about saying that there’s a need to revisit this.

MS. KILBANE: Yeah, and I think following up on that, we have a comment that came in about, you know, broadening the conversation about the aging community beyond, you know, sort of Title V, which I think you’re both touching on that. You know, we have a Title V program that’s very specific that includes, you know, certainly as you said, Jane, like, community service as well as the training component.

But we certainly have older workers sort of beyond Title V and in terms of the whole Older Workers Act, you know, what do we need to do? And I think that’s an interesting broader comment following up on the point that you just made.

MS. GREENLEE: Grace, if I could comment because I can see that one that’s come in. We’re here today to talk about SCSEP and Title V specifically. In my prior meeting with Jane, we covered many topics that were not Title V, including the Workforce Investment Act, other training opportunities. We would like to be able to make sure we partner and talk about older workers and older workforce as much as possible. And this was just the first opportunity to

really be able to focus on our conversation. But I think I'll be back talking about other things that we could develop.

MS. OATES: One of the comments that you made earlier was targeting SCSEP positions to key areas of need and that questioner specifically targeted long-term care institutions or schools as tutors to children in need of reading help. You know, I think, Kathy, we can agree that we'll include in the conversation Corporation for National Service, who has the sponsored reading program, that specifically does that tutoring.

I think it's a great suggestion to think about how, while leaving flexibility for individual programs, to identify those target areas, we could certainly gain some information about how the sponsored grantees are doing in terms of getting recipients. I think their financial guidelines are similar, if not exactly the same.

I think – but I don't know enough about their current status about where they have waiting lists, whether they have more interest than they can afford or whether, indeed, they're – (inaudible). So that is a great suggestion and we'll promise to check in with our friends at the Corporation for National Service, just specifically thinking about that one and look opportunities that might be in long-term care institutions as well.

The other program – a corporation that looks at home health is the Senior Companions Program. And they may be able to give us some information specifically about is there a need for that senior companion-type program in areas that they can't cover? So we'll follow up on this and I bet, Kathy, there's more that you could look at in long-term care that's beyond those service communities.

MS. GREENLEE: Well, I appreciate the person who made the comment. I think we touched on this in a prior meeting.

MS. OATES: Yeah, we did.

MS. GREENLEE: Jane and I really covered a number of issues in the prior meeting. We're meeting with the corporation to figure out how to support their work, have their work support the network, that's there's a nexus there, that we – (inaudible).

MS. OATES: And now that they have an appointed person that we can actually –

(Cross talk.)

MS. KILBANE: Okay, I know that we've got a couple callers on the phone line. So Gary, do you think that we can turn to them now?

MR. GONZALEZ: Sure.

MS. KILBANE: And for those of you, please join the queue for telephone comments or keep your written comments coming while we turn to the phone line.

MR. GONZALEZ: And Doug, anybody that's on the phone line who would like to make comments for the assistant secretary, please un-mute the line.

OPERATOR: Yes, we have our first comment on the phone coming in from Lita Levine Kleger from Experience Works. Please go ahead.

MR. GONZALEZ: Hi, Lita.

Q: Okay, thank you very much for taking – for giving this opportunity to Experience Works to make these comments. During the reauthorization process for the Older Americans Act, we had the unique opportunity to examine how some of the policies create – (inaudible) – a greater number of services to meet the increasing needs of disadvantaged older Americans and their community. And to accomplish this, we have some suggestions:

The first is, strengthen and expand older worker programs so that they have a bigger impact on employment and training services for the fastest growing segment of the population. Maintain the \$825 million level of funding for SCSEP at a minimum to meet the growing needs of older individuals and their communities in light of demographic, social and economic challenges of the future.

Maintain the SCSEP at the U.S. Department of Labor. With the dramatic aging of the workforce, DOL can build on the long-term record of success of the SCSEP to expand communication and coordination with other workforce programs to ensure that the needs of older workers are met.

Eliminate durational limits for the SCSEP. In these uncertain economic climate, participants in SCSEP should be allowed to remain on the program rather than be subject to the maximum time extension they would be permitted in the current law. We recommend the Department of Labor interim and proposed regulations to implement the 2006 law not be considered during reauthorization.

Develop performance requirements based on populations served by SCSEP. These would include using different definitions such as placement rather than entered employment, earnings gained rather than average earnings and a community service measure that reflects the value of community service rather than number of hours worked by participants.

Further strengthen the community service mission of the SCSEP to maintain community service as a core performance requirement and ensure that the measure reflects its true value in a community.

Establish service options that respond to a range of individual circumstances and goals. For example, include provisions for a community service-only law for participants so community

needs will be furthered and/or employment is not a feasible goal for the participant. Conversely, for those participants who only need customized employment services provided by SCSEP to be employed, they should be permitted to take advantage of only those services they need.

Modify the SCSEP eligibility requirements to allow us to really – (inaudible) – afford individuals the opportunity to participate. Expand services by implementing Older Americans Act section 502(e), the pilot, demonstration and evaluation project, to provide new services for SCSEP participants, as well as assisting those who are poor but do not qualify for SCSEP.

Create a competitive grant-making process that ensures efficiency, fairness and minimal disruption to customers and is based on experience and performance. Grantees that meet performance expectations should not have – (inaudible) – disrupted every four years or so, which results in a decrease in services to older workers and at least for the first full year as to competition. And absent unusual circumstances, grantees should not be awarded – (inaudible) – to which they have applied and do not have expertise to serve.

Provide clarification and streamline the law to eliminate the complicated data validation and data collection requirements. Current data collection requirements result in complicated procedures which place an inordinate value on compiling information rather than on customer-focused service delivery.

And finally, support the administration of SCSEP to Employment and Training administration funds rather than reducing grants to cover the cost of administration. And thank you so much for the opportunity to submit these comments. And we will submit them in writing as well.

MS. OATES: Thank you. That was going to be my ask – because you should have seen me here, busily trying to take notes.

Q: No, I've got them in writing. So I'll send that to you on the website. Thank you so much. We really appreciate this.

MS. OATES: Thank you.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Lita. And I'll just put back the link to the e-mail address in the chat window so that you can easily e-mail your comments to both assistant secretaries. And Doug, do we have anyone else on the line?

OPERATOR: Yes. We actually have quite a few other comments queued up on the phone. Our next one comes in from Tony Sarmiento from Senior Service America. Please go ahead.

Q: Hello, can you hear me?

MR. GONZALEZ: Hi Tony. Yes we can.

Q: Great. Thank you, Assistant Secretaries Oates and Greenlee for convening this first ever listening session on Title V. As a national SCSEP grantee with 81 local sub-grantees, we're eager to assist the two departments to work together on a wide range of joint efforts.

We need both one-stop career centers and area agencies on aging to increase their commitment, expertise and capacity to better serve older adults through the employment and training meetings. The reauthorization of both WIA and the Older Americans Act can help achieve this goal. We also hope that ETA considers working with AOA on a joint letter similar to ETA's earlier joint letter with the Administration on Children and Families about summer youth employment.

I have two main points today: First, let's reaffirm SCSEP as a person-centered aging program that also has workforce and community force goals. And second, let's explore how the WIA might increase its service to larger numbers of older adults and clarify the appropriate coordination between SCSEP and WIA.

On my first point, let's embrace SCSEP as a person-centered aging program. For too long it's been an opinion that the Department of Labor has held a too-narrow view of SCSEP as strictly only a workforce development program, even after the 2006 Older Americans Act reauthorization – (inaudible) – Congress was clearly stated otherwise.

SCSEP's person-centered approach and multiple missions argue for keeping SCSEP under the Older Americans Act and administered by the Department of Labor. But we need to reconsider the current SCSEP performance measures. What outcomes would reaffirm and improve SCSEP's performance as an aging program? How can one use the latest research in gerontology to suggest possible performance measures for SCSEP that focus on health and self-efficacy in addition to the current measures related to job placement?

We also may need to reexamine a relationship of WIA's common measures and SCSEP performance. We think that it's produced mixed results at best, after reviewing the aggregate performance of all SCSEP grantees since program year 2004. We recommend that the department consider returning to the DOL practice prior to 2004, which set one goal for service levels and unsubsidized placement rates for all national and state grantees.

An expanded view of SCSEP as more than a workforce program suggests other revisions to Title V. For example, we recommend that SCSEP participants who leave to enter another community service program, such as Senior Corps or AmeriCorps be considered a positive outcome.

We also recommend a total overhaul of section 502(e) so that pilot, demonstration and evaluation projects promote collaboration between SCSEP, the Aging Services Network, national and community service programs, as well as workforce programs. How can 502(e) encourage new kinds of subsidized jobs so SCSEP participants can help address unmet community needs or better support the Aging Services Network? Too often it seems SCSEP participants are pigeonholed and undervalued, not only because of their age but also due to their race, gender or education.

On my second point, let's explore how WIA might increase its service of larger numbers of older adults in clarifying the appropriate coordination between SCSEP and WIA. Reports by the GAO and others have documented that WIA has served relatively small numbers of older workers of all incomes and educational levels. We deeply appreciate how Assistant Secretary Oates has been speaking directly and candidly about how WIA is under-serving all sorts of individuals disadvantaged in the labor market. Our nation needs both an expanded SCSEP as well as a WIA program that serves growing numbers of older Americans who will need or want jobs.

We support Secretary Oates' efforts to implement WIA performance measures in a way that reduces training. This can form the basis for rethinking how best to coordinate SCSEP and WIA and avoid unnecessary duplication. We will continue to explore possible refinements and improvements in Title V with our sub-grantees and others. And we'll share them with ETA and AOA. Thank you for this opportunity to participate in today's session.

MS. OATES: Tony, thank you for those comments. And I appreciate it. And I want to make clear your comments and someone who was typing in comments brought up the fact that many feel that SCSEP participants are not being seen in the same way when they go to a Workforce Investment Act-funded one-stop.

Let me make it clear: Age discrimination is wrong everywhere. If someone going into a one-stop is not being served because they don't look they are the kind of candidate that would give quick results, we're going to do everything we can to change that in the Workforce Investment reauthorization performance measures to get rid of that element of – (inaudible).

But if you feel that you're being discriminated against, I beg you, report that. Discrimination by age is against the law just as all other discrimination. Report it to your government official or report it directly to me and we'll take care of it because there is absolutely no reason why an older worker, whether a SCSEP grantee or not, going into a one-stop would feel that they are being denied either intensive services or training services if they have the qualifications to go for what they're trying to be trained for.

So please, help us police this. It's really hard to be in all places at once. But discrimination is wrong regardless of the umbrella under which that discrimination is offered.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Jane. Before we move to our next comments over the phone, I just want to remind folks, we're going to actually put them back and forth between comments from the phone and through the online chat application. What we're going to try to get you to do is try to keep your comments to about three minutes to remain respectful of others who would like to hop on the line and have some time with both assistant secretaries. Thank you. Doug, is anyone else on the phone?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have our next phone comment coming in from Damon Cochran (sp) from the New York State Office of Aging. Please go ahead.

Q: Yeah, hello, everybody. Hello, Undersecretary Oates. I just wanted to touch base on – and follow up on the comments that were shared by Tony and employee needs – (inaudible) – regarding the performance standards. Based on our conversations with our state’s department of labor as part of our efforts on that we were involved in as part of the National Governor’s Association initiative on civic engagement, we’ve really been able to work a lot more closely with our Department of Labor and discuss with them some of the issues that we hear are occurring at the local level.

And one of the things that we sort of stress is the issue regarding performance standards and the disincentives that the performance standards create in terms of the – in terms of the – (inaudible) – challenges that the older person faces trying to integrate into the training system as well, for most offices now.

And as a result of that, what we hear in our many stories of individuals who are old or out of work for a long period of time and also require a higher level of – more persistent attempts because of some of the challenges that they face as they reintegrate back into the workforce or try to find employment that they can take advantage of or get hired into.

The other thing, too – I just wanted to let everybody know, there was a great article in today’s New York Times talking about older people in the health workforce, specifically regarding home care, the home care issue. I just wanted to point that out because in New York we have two unique things that are happening regarding Title V. One of these is New York City Department of Aging has created home-care worker training programs being funded through Title V, as we know, from Western New York down to the counties as an effort to enhance the training of older individuals – (inaudible) – into long-term care, the long-term care sector.

And I just wanted to point out some of the things that people have been expressing are some of the issues regarding some of the structural elements of how Title V works, that people within each – (inaudible) – may like to take a closer look at and we’ll send it to both of you guys in writing so you can take a look at that. So, thank you.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, John.

MS. OATES: I’m going to go to one of the comments, Kathy. And it’s definitely for my job, someone really – (inaudible) – that they’ve been working with Title V for 17 years. And in the last few years DOL has made this program almost impossible to operate: too much bureaucracy and too much reliance on outside contractors that, for example, Mathematica.

I really would like that contributor or anyone else on the line to give me specifics. Too much bureaucracy becomes like a huge, over-hanging cloud. And we don’t know what that means.

But if you and the other participants can give us specific examples, we really are committed to every day improving our customer service; every day trying to reduce a lot of the unnecessary burden that we put on you. Remember, we have to uphold the law. So of course in the reauthorization we’ll be looking to make sure we’re reducing the bureaucracy burden.

I will say, mentioning Mathematica, a lot of the burden that you may be experiencing could be looking at our evaluations. If that's what it is, that's one that we're going to have to learn to live with. We find it burdensome as well but our friends in the Congress are not going to keep appropriating us money unless we are able to demonstrate effectiveness.

But that is not to say that we can't do it in a better way. So I look forward to your suggestions and comments on that. And please be brutally honest. We have thick skin. If there are ways that we can improve, we need to know exactly how we can go about that. And we don't have to wait for reauthorization to improve our customer service.

MS. KILBANE: Great. Thank you, Jane. There is an interesting comment up here about how we need both a One-Stop Center as well as the area agency on aging to increase commitment and expertise and their capacity to better serve older adults with employment training needs. And of course we know that, you know, in this recession it's difficult for all workers out there – especially those that have lost their jobs – getting reemployed. And we also know that many workers are working longer and that some of the job growth in areas has been older workers staying in the workforce as opposed to retiring.

And so I think that this comes with a – just kind of a bigger focus on how we can work together across organizations for older workers across many programs – not just the Title V program. I think that we've had a lot of themes on that. But I know, Jane, you have been talking about older workers having access for universal services.

There's another comment that talks about SCSEP as being sort of a transitional job or pathway. So clearly those are two separate programs that were running as really demonstration projects that would not – you know, would not certainly prohibit older workers. So I thought that was interesting, seeing how this was reaching out to the many different treatments.

MS. GREENLEE: The packet – Jane and I were reading through these and recalling what I heard on the road. And much of it was this thread. And Tony had commented in our Alexandria listening session about the role of Title V within the larger context of the aging services network, the Older Americans Act. And it sort of serves two masters almost, so to speak, by working and bringing – (inaudible) – in the Department of Labor with employment offerings, but being contained within a broader access to supporting community service. And those are slightly different objectives.

For people who watch this program and from the rest of the Older Americans Act program, it's just critical that we continue to partner together to talk about how essential it is to have Title V workers support those programs. The Older Americans Act has not ever significantly been able to increase federal funding. We are seeing a tremendous loss of support at the state level and straight on down to the community level where area agencies and others can't leverage additional support.

And having this help from the – subsidized help for workers is very important to the network. So it serves to focus this area that may easily be measured by other more traditional Department of Labor goals. Second – (inaudible) – comment about some of the – (inaudible) – in writing.

MS. OATES: Yeah, and I think that, in the deal, to be responsive the Department of Labor in previous years decided that SCSEP should be treated like a workforce – WIA program. And I think it's a very different program. And therefore the idea that we would be looking in this legislation to align the performance outcomes in Title V with the performance outcomes in the Workforce Investment Act are not ideas that I would be putting forward.

I think it is a totally separate program; it doesn't share; it's in the Older Americans Act. We should be looking to more closely align the outcome measures for Title V with a broader Older Americans Act, not another piece of legislation that is not necessarily directly related.

That being said, we do want to align program eligibility. And I go back and say that again, you know, that we should be doing all that we can so those SCSEP participants who want to engage in WIA activities, we should be making it seamless. But that does not include the performance measures.

So in anything that we move forward in this reauthorization, grantees and people interested in communities will see no push by the Department of Labor to do anything with performance measures; they had better align them with the Workforce Investment Act: Inappropriate as far as we're concerned.

(Cross talk.)

MS. GREENLEE: I've gotten a lot of comments along that line. There was one comment that came in which was sort of interesting – and it talks a little bit about that there wasn't any discussion to include contributions to the community that are done online, not just in person. This question looks to the future and sees brighter possibilities for seniors who engage in community. Community engagement like including tutoring is the example that they're using.

And I'm assuming that they're meaning seniors tutoring elders online? I mean, I think it's an interesting comment, but I think whoever made it, if they could potentially give us a little bit more information about what you mean about looking into the future, and seniors participating more online or virtually, as opposed to in person, in this community service, which is what I think this is getting to. If you could clarify that, that would be helpful for us, because we want to get all innovative ideas – and of course, here in the Employment and Training Administration, there's a lot of attention to online learning – (inaudible) – these days.

MS. OATES: And yet, another questioner brings up the – “How can DOL and other agencies best address mature workers' needs if the job seeker is most interested in part-time work, and we measure success in full-time work?” I think that's a really good suggestion, and one that we'll discuss, because there are many mature workers who may prefer to work part-time because of reasons they don't want to share with the rest of us.

Their partner or spouse could be ailing and they have a lot of doctor's appointments, and rather than worrying about taking time off, they'd rather work part-time, where they can have a little bit more control. Or maybe they just want a – (inaudible) – you know, stop and smell the flowers a little bit, which wouldn't be, you know, a bad thing. So I think that is a very good suggestion that we should explore.

If it is, indeed, the worker's desire to look for part-time work – or the SCSEP participant's desire to look for part-time work – I think we should look at recognizing that. But I think that, that measurement comes in tandem with measuring the annual salary – (inaudible) – money for the person through employment. If they're working part-time, they'll have to have both – (inaudible). Right, no I think that's right.

MS. GREENLEE: And another thing that I noted in some of the comments that are coming in is that there's a lot of references to the current and difficult economy that we're experiencing, and how things should be changed for this economy. And I think in that context – and of course, when we have laws out there, we want those laws to be able to work across all economies. And so perhaps, you know, defining, for us, the flexibility within which you'd like to see it, as opposed to saying, change the law for this economy or that economy.

For example, one of them is saying that the six-month – one of the comments suggested that the six-month look-back of household income should be done away with – eliminated – because of this economy – that many seniors are losing jobs and that's a little – (inaudible). So it would be good to have – you know, giving a little bit more thought about, how do we make a law flexible across varying cycles in the economy for performance measures and other things such as that. Gary, do we have some other callers in the queue that, maybe, we would want to turn to?

MR. GONZALEZ: I'm sure we do. Doug, if we have anyone on the phone, if you would, please un-mute their line. And I just want to – before you do that – reiterate, if you could, if you're a phone – (inaudible) – please keep your comments to about three minutes so we can remain – (inaudible) – lining up on the phone. Doug?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have another comment on the phone coming in from Olga Yunokova (sp) from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Please go ahead.

Q: Okay. Thank you so much for this opportunity to participate in today's session. And Massachusetts – (inaudible) – has the following comments: As we all know very well – (inaudible) – article suggests that notion of retirement at age 65 or 67 is – (inaudible). Multiple studies and surveys also show that there is a number of different reasons people have for being – or returning to the workforce. Some do it to stay mentally active; others to make ends meet. Regardless of reasons to continue to work, Americans will be in the workforce a lot longer, and this will have a wide-reaching effect on the workplace.

There was a comment earlier that SCSEP is the only federal program targeting mature workers, and we believe that it has the potential to play an important role in developing skilled older

workers. As the numbers of SCSEP-eligible individuals is growing, the SCSEP program will be working with a different pool of people. (Inaudible) – we think, the program should be more flexible and robust, and I'll explain in which ways.

Right now, we also find the following aspects of the program to be very effective: the program accountability. We think the performance measures are important and they work well in our state. The ratio (ph) limits are also very helpful in order to reinforce the – (inaudible) – employment activities of the program. And furthermore, improving partnership with the WIA system helps to ensure better resource sharing, especially in regards to – (inaudible) – resources.

Where we would like to see the program improvements is, from program planning and development point of view, SCSEP should be able to provide government-skills training by establishing a pipeline between the local employers and training providers like community colleges, working more closely with the CCL (ph) – (inaudible) – system to help ensure that.

For the program participants, we would like to see the flexibility of the program in developing multiple job arrangements or different ways of paying the wages and the hours adjustments. From another program improvements point of view, I think we need to make an important distinction to the essence of the SCSEP wages. If they are viewed as a training stipend, the SCSEP wages, we think, should be exempt. As we are right now, these are exempt wages for group – (inaudible) – and we think that they can be exempt for all – for individuals in all federal benefits, such as Medicaid, SSI, SSEI (ph) and unemployment benefits, et cetera.

In conclusion, we would like to say that SCSEP has potential to become a great systems model for highly beneficial, intensive employment and training programs, with the ultimate goal of unsubsidized employment for mature workers. Thank you.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Olga. And Doug – or actually, before we turn to our next caller, I just want to point out that, on the previous slide – and actually, it was on the – (inaudible) – feature itself, I've supplied the e-mail address to you: titlevlisteningession@dol.gov.

Apparently, that e-mail address is not functioning, but it will be, so jot it down or – (inaudible) – recording to get the e-mail address. Again, it is titlevlisteningession@dol.gov. And Doug, do we have anyone else on the line?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have our next comment on the phone coming in from Gene Lowe (sp) from the Center for Physical and Mental Health of the Elderly. Please go ahead.

Q: This is Gene. I'm not as astute as many of the others, and I appreciate all that you've been – (inaudible). My question is, how can we use computers and technology to help us reach some of our goals? It's not becoming more widely accepted among the elderly that users and technology is being used to assist the elderly. I just wanted to leave you with that concept and see what you had to say about it. Thank you.

MS. OATES: Thanks, Gene. I mean, I think we're all finding that, every day, we were finding different ways to use technology to make our life easier, and to do things more efficiently. I think for the SCSEP – the common SCSEP grantees, I think we'll pose that question to them. You know, are there ways that they think we could utilize technology in a more effective way? Someone earlier brought up the idea of, could we capture the impact on communities that people are providing through technology, and you know, I think we're all sitting here very interested in understanding how that would – what that would look like.

But remember, a few years ago, I was wondering what an iPad would look like. So please don't take that as a turn-off, but just an area where I think we're very willing to explore the use of technology, and just need some specifics – and if there's some impediment right now, either through legislation or regulation, for your being able to use technology, I think that would be really important to put forward, either today or at your convenience in the near future, so we can do what we can to remove that impediment.

MS. GREENLEE: And I think – I mean, this is a fascinating question that really has not come up with us at AOA, which is, how can we use technology to support volunteerism and community service? So interesting to have a couple of comments along that line.

Another thing to add to the list when we talked to people on the cooperation end – I mean, what are the ways that we could use technology to check in on individuals who are homebound (ph) to make sure they're okay? And how can we do that, measure that so that it's helpful and figure out ways that technology can help, kind of, reach farther to people who are interested? So that's interesting, and I sense we'd both be more interested in more conversation about it.

MS. OATES: Yeah, absolutely. And we got a series of questions that are confusing to us, and it's about using kinds of aid to count towards your eligibility. That piece, I understand. So in other words, someone wrote, "Why does Medicaid and fuel assistance and things like that have to be counted towards your income in SCSEP?" I think that's a really good point for us to look at.

I mean, if we're pushing people out because we're counting fuel assistance in a state where it happens to have a cold winter. We – (inaudible) – we put clear guidance out on that. The same thing with folks who are receiving Medicaid. We need to make sure that, that's – if that's being counted now, we'll go back and look at that. We need to make sure that we investigate what Medicaid guidelines that we thought we were responding to. But clearly, they bring up good points.

But there was another questioner who had something similar along that – and I've now lost the question. You know, "I'd like people who receive Medicaid and fuel assistance not to be penalized," was one, and there was another about – you can probably find it faster than I can – about that imposing on your wages, or something. Conflicting performance measures not counting SCSEP earnings as wages for any other federal program, such as Medicaid. Kathy and I actually kind of looked at each other.

Our goal in life is to get more people qualified for programs like Medicaid. So we don't know what – we'd like a little more example of that. You know, we don't want to push people out of Medicaid eligibility because they're participating in SCSEP, but we certainly don't want to push people out of SCSEP because they're getting Medicaid or fuel insurance. So if there's some other conversation that needs to be had around that so that we're better clarified, please type it in or call it in.

MS. GREENLEE: There's a question, actually, that came in which related directly to a comment that Jane made earlier is, "where and who do you report age discrimination to," is the comment. And I'm just going to say, on that, this webinar will be posted and we will post some answers to questions. This one, we have very clear direction on how to do that, and we will make sure that it's posted as an answer to that question, with this. And we'll also make sure that our guidance is out there, and – (inaudible) – and all of that. So that is – (inaudible) – that you'll know what it is. Gary, we have another phone call or are we going to move to the open chat?

MR. GONZALEZ: We're actually going to move to the open chat. So just a heads up for everyone that's gotten used to using the closed chat. Right now, you're going to be seeing on your screen – pretty much taking up the bulk of your screen – is a chat window. This is an open chat so anything you type in will be viewable by other participants. So be on your best behavior. You still have the option to jump in on the phone line. But here, you have something in front of you – a sort of topic of discussion – "what are your thoughts on the relationship between national and state grantees?"

So again, you can use that open chat at the bottom of your screen or – (inaudible). And I just want to point out, if you want to send something directly to our speakers so that other participants can't see what you type in, if you click that drop-down option at the bottom right of your window, or of your monitor, where it says "to everyone." If you click that, you'll see that there is a "presenters" option. If you make that selection, only our speakers will be able to see what you type in – (inaudible) – presenting. So again, you have that open chat in front of you. As we're waiting for that to populate, Doug, if there's anyone on the phone?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have another comment on the phone coming in from Christine Catapas (ph) from the NAPCA. Please go ahead.

Q: Okay, can you hear me?

MR. GONZALEZ: Hi, Christine.

Q: Hi there. Okay, thank you very much Assistant Secretaries Greenlee and Oates for convening these listening forums. The Title V program under the Older Americans Act has enabled thousands of low-income, Asian-American and Pacific-Islander older adults to gain employable skills while helping build capacity at local 501(c)(3) community-based organizations in the AA/PI community since 1989. With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging has served close to 1500 older adults in nine cities annually through this important program.

NAPCA appreciates the importance of balancing the many goals and priorities of this program – community service, job training, performance accountability, among others. And we encourage the ultimate focus of Title V to remain the community service program to assist older adults in need. The older adults who are enrolled in Title V enter as unemployable individuals. Eighty-eight percent of participants served by NAPCA are limited-English-proficient, and 87 percent are literacy skills-deficient.

So the performance criteria to exit LEP and literacy skills-deficient participants for employment within four years and check their placement after exit are challenging measures in itself. But the data requirements that – (inaudible) – the many pieces of our performance can be excessive and, at some times, unrealistic.

We are concerned that a balance must be maintained so that minority populations can continue to be well-served without grantees losing credit for real performance due to extensive data requirements. We therefore ask that the importance of flexibility be maintained in dealing with the Title V program because of the special needs and populations we serve.

We will continue to do our best in expanding our service to the under-served populations within the Asian-American and Pacific-Islander older adult population, and we thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's listening forum. Thank you.

MS. OATES: Thank you, Christine.

MR. GONZALEZ: And Doug, do we have anyone else on the line?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have another phone comment coming in from Anne Penny from Edmonds Community College.

MR. GONZALEZ: Well, Anne, we're going to take your comment and then I think we'll turn to some of the comments that have come in to the open chat. Anne?

Q: Hi. This is Anne Penny. I'm at Edmonds Community College and I don't have a formal statement, but I do have a question – a couple of points I'd like to make. One is a critical point, I think, with regard to eligibility. With the last training and guidance letter that I've got issued from DOL, December '06, which requires that we include educational assistance as part of the income eligibility for seniors in SCSEP. And it explains that, that is Pell Grants and other government educational assistance scholarships or grants.

And in this evolving economy, people are continually retooling. And if our seniors are receiving Medicare and Social Security, they're obviously going to qualify for educational assistance. So it seems odd that we would include that as part of your income eligibility in accountable income. The other point I wanted to make was that I really think that SCSEP has a special niche between the dislocated workers that WIA typically serves and more elderly seniors.

So we have found this to be an absolute gem of a program for our seniors that need a little bit of help and they need some practical experience in addition to some training at the local community colleges. Thank you.

MS. OATES: Thanks, Anne. I have to be honest with you: The guidance letter that went out in December of '06 predates me, so if I could ask you, I'd like to go over that guidance to make sure of what it is. And if it is something that needs to be revisited, please know that we will put out new guidance on it.

But we certainly want to make sure that seniors who don't have a bachelor's degree and are eligible for Pell Grants are using those Pell Grants. But we need to – we'll work on whatever that guidance is, because maybe since December of 2006, even our friends at the Department of Education have put out new guidance on Pells. We'll make sure we're reflecting everything that's current. Thanks for bringing that to our attention.

MR. GONZALEZ: Okay, now I think we're just looking into some of the online comments from our sort of discussion topic question about the relationship between national and state grantees.

MS. GREENLEE: I think that we've seen a lot of very positive comments on the relationship, as well as some discussions on ways to maybe improve data sharing or other ways to improve the relationship. So far, it looks very positive.

MS. OATES: And we had a few comments about this. There was a general sense of, what should the split be between the number – the money going to the national contractors and the states. So I want to acknowledge that, because this is a public chat now, people may want to not jeopardize relationships that they have, but may feel that they'd like to change that split. So you have the opportunity to give us information through the AOA website or to send the information straight here to the Department of Labor.

(Cross talk.)

MS. OATES: Yeah, if you want to provide more information – because it's nice to us to see that things are working well, but I know that the conversation about, what's the right balance between national and state did come up.

MR. GONZALEZ: Right, and to Jane's point, if you want to send something directly to us, if you click the drop-down option at the bottom right of your chat window and select "presenters," only our speakers will be able to see what you type and other participants won't see what you type into the chat. Well, while we're looking for new chat comments, Doug, is anyone else on the line?

OPERATOR: Yes, we have a comment on the phone coming in from Monica Stetler (sp) from the state of Wisconsin. Please go ahead.

Q: Thank you, Assistant Secretary Oates and Assistant Secretary Greenlee, and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to present to you some recommendations, which are supported by the federal-state – (inaudible) – workforce. And I'm hoping that my voice will hold out for this. (Coughs.) Excuse me.

For 40 years, Title V of the Older Americans Act is still effectively providing employment services to low-income older people. Nonprofit organizations have promoted and helped the older worker by providing work experience and an opportunity to learn new skills. Title V was then, and always will be, person-oriented.

Older people face complicated barriers to employment, such as mental and physical health issues, substance and alcohol abuse, perhaps being at risk of homelessness, lack of education and outdated skills from working long times in jobs that have been replaced by technology or others. Transportation and housing often create challenges for the older worker in seeking and retaining gainful employment. Still others are caregivers to their parent or grandchildren. Some are called upon to support children they currently have.

Addressing each individual's barriers ensures they move forward in their work assignment, which eventually may lead to unsubsidized employment. Title V has overcome several challenges, including the elimination of JTCA (ph) 3 percent set-aside training to older people in 1998, with the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization – authorization. Under DOL leadership, and since WIA's inception, outside programs have found it difficult to focus on the congressional intent of the program.

For years, DOL has struggled with Title V and its dual identity as both an employment and community service program. As an Older Americans Act program – (inaudible) – individuals have the opportunity to be employed through Title V. On the other hand – (inaudible) – network expresses concern over workforce shortages in the field of long-term care that does not take into consideration the older worker. Older workers have the right to work, earn a decent living and remain independent, productive members of their community for as long as possible.

Reflecting on previous Older Americans Act reauthorizations, the Administration on Aging's – (inaudible) – were provided information and had an opportunity to influence changes recommended by DOL. Those opportunities have decreased considerably over the last couple of authorizations, beginning in 2000. Creating new language in the OAA would strengthen that by creating solid partnerships between AOA and ETA.

Under both the OAA and WIA legislation, Title V is identified as a required partner, yet there is a drift away from being person-centered with the community service focus, to being employment-focused and performance-driven. Title V has wrestled with the significant changes imposed by ETA. As a mandatory partner, Title V is expected to participate in the Workforce Development System, yet has struggled with how this move has adversely affected the vulnerable population we serve.

For example, technical assistance is being provided on recruiting older people, finding suitable training – providing suitable training or employers, understanding DOL performance expectations and how to allocate data to ensure individuals are providing us with accurate information. However, we received no technical assistance that will help us deal with barriers most – (inaudible). Information about ABRC’s (ph) long-term planning for those not employable – (inaudible) – network program services, such as evidence-based prevention programs, such as EDSMP (ph), are much needed, yet not provided.

This is why the state units on aging and state departments of workforce support strengthening statutory recognition and collaboration between AOA, state units on aging and ETA. Secretary Oates and Assistant Secretary Greenlee, the state units on aging and the state departments of workforce have been working together to develop recommendations, and part of them is to strengthen the statutory recognition and collaboration with AOA and the state units on aging role in the administration and the SCSEP.

SCSEP needs to be recognized as an aging program and seen not only as a partner within the Workforce Investment Act. We need to ensure that the – (inaudible) – of the Older Americans Act Title V are consistent and interpreted accurate, following the title of the act – (inaudible) – severe disability is. And that was in the context of the Workforce Investment Act. We need to redefine and reduce the unnecessary added burden imposed by data validation, including elements in the broad array of documentation needed to verify information disclosed by low-income older workers.

We need to reduce or eliminate statutory and regulatory barriers imposed by the Workforce Investment Act on SCSEP and the population it serves. What works well for WIA may not be suitable for SCSEP. And second of all, we need to enhance the capacity of the SCSEP program to respond effectively to the – (inaudible) – employment, economic and personal needs of the older person by allowing grantees to establish the ratio limits within their respective states, basing that primarily on the individual employability plan, thereby eliminating caps, waivers and the one-time aggregate employment.

Also, we want to define jobs and training suitable and realistically attainable for the older worker. We want to provide information and education on disabilities and assistive technology in the workplace so the older workers themselves with disabilities can make informed decisions about their employment and – (inaudible) – actions.

We want to exempt – SCSEP wages should not be counted as income for individuals receiving federal benefits, such as Medicaid, and to revise – (inaudible) – for state grantees by eliminating the reduction of funds – (inaudible) – severely impact minimally funded grants’ usability to correct deficiencies, and revise technical assistance and training as the alternative, which would eliminate the disruption in service to older workers. Thank you very much.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Monica. And Doug, just give me a sense of how many folks we have queued up on the phone? Do you have a sense of that?

OPERATOR: Yes, we currently have about two other questions in queue – (inaudible) – sorry.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you. We're going to go ahead and take on of those – or take, actually, everybody else in the queue. I just wanted to get a sense of how many folks we've got on the line – didn't want to keep you waiting. So Doug, we'll go ahead and take the next person in queue.

OPERATOR: Yes, our next comment comes in from Mara Vignardi (sp) from the Unidad of Miami Beach. Please go ahead.

Q: Yes, hello everyone.

MR. GONZALEZ: Hi, Mara.

Q: I just wanted just to touch base and explore the new technology. And over the whole United States on – in the SCSEP program, the whole goal is to find a job for the seniors and have a better community. With that in mind, I think when we give orientation of those who are active participants, we should have a higher standard when it comes to training and immediately implementing of the participant's active part.

Keeping the expectations high, it's easy for everybody overall to have an outstanding customer service for the community and to please, overall, our employers. I think that, overall, we really, really expect more positive outcomes for everybody overall. And looking for the long picture, we can definitely – (inaudible) – for a long, long term. Thank you, though. I thought it was going to be something interesting for participants that have been in for long term in this program. (Inaudible.)

MS. GREENLEE: Thanks, Mara.

MS. OATES: Thank you.

Q: You're welcome. Thank you. Have a nice day.

MR. GONZALEZ: You too. We'll go to take the next person in queue.

OPERATOR: Yeah, so our next comment on the phone comes from Andrew Stun from the Center for Labor Market Studies. Please go ahead.

Q: Thank you. I actually have two topics I'd like to cover – (inaudible) – but I'm going to submit these five pages I prepared for you over the weekend on these two issues. One of them is related to the question that has been talked about, which is – including preparing the budget – about what we know about the plight of older workers in the country. And so I think it's important for us to understand two things.

On the one hand, during the recession that we've had over the last few years, the fact remains that older workers – 55 and older – actually, in the aggregate, have fared the best. They have actually improved their employment level since the beginning of the recession – only age group to do so – and their employment rate, overall, has declined the least.

So one might ask, is how do we deal with this in the budget process, but our analysis of the data clearly shows that what's missing from all labor market analysis on this issue is that within the older worker population, the groups that are eligible for SCSEP have been doing extremely poorly and are doing among the worst in the entire country. So our case for SCSEP is actually based on the following major findings.

One, the unemployment rate – the official unemployment rate for 55- to 64-year-olds who had an income under \$15,000 last year rose from 15 percent prior to recession, which, by the way, was more than double the national rate, to nearly 24 percent at the end of last year. Those older workers with low-incomes are four times as likely to be unemployed as their similar-aged peers who have incomes greater than \$25,000.

Now, if we take workers 65 to 74 years old who are also low-income, it turns out their unemployment rate had jumped to 16 percent by the end of last year. They were two-and-a-half times as likely to be unemployed as their same-age peers and doubled the unemployment rate for all of the adults in the country.

The last thing that we looked at, though, was the whole question of going beyond official unemployment. What you find among low-income older workers is that a much greater proportion of them are reporting problems of under-employment and more are reporting problems with what we call hidden unemployment. That is, they want a job – they express an interest in a job – but gave up looking for work.

When we simply add those three problems together, as of March, 2010, what we found was that on poor and – (inaudible) – adults who would be eligible for SCSEP, we found that the under-utilization rate was 46 percent. Forty-six percent of all those in the labor force are either unemployed, under-employed or hidden unemployed. That ratio, by the way, was four times what it was for older adults with incomes over \$25,000, and it was nearly three times the rate for all adults in the entire country.

So the answer is, as you look at the SCSEP-eligible population, this is the group that, in the last two years, has not only increased substantially in numbers, but is experiencing labor market problems at a rate they have never before. So the need for this program is extremely high. And the number of individuals who would like to participate, we estimated last year, is 120 times – the eligible population is 120 times the size of the number of individuals who were enrolled in the program last year.

Last quick comment: Our second paper has to do with some of the discussions about changing eligibility. There are those who argue that we should raise the income threshold to 200 percent of poverty. There are others who suggest we lower the age of eligibility to 52 years. What we

did over the last week and month – (inaudible) – and for you, Jane, if you’re still on the phone – to ask the question, what would happen to the eligible population? And here are the basic facts.

Currently, we estimate there are approximately 9.2 million individuals who are eligible for SCSEP under existing eligibility. If we both raised the income eligibility to 200 percent and allowed 52- to 64-year-olds to become eligible, the number of eligible folks would be 20 million. Twenty million is equal to 300 times the number of slots we have to serve the eligible population today.

So in making decisions about eligibility, we need to take into account that substantial - (inaudible) – for the eligibles, relative to need. Making the case for SCSEP today is greater than ever before. This group is going to be growing over the next few years, but we also need to give serious consideration as to how we want to fit the eligibility criteria for participation. Thank you.

MS. OATES: Andy, it’s Jane. Thank you so much. You know, for somebody who has used your research for the last two decades on youth, I am so thrilled to hear that you and your resources, et cetera, are looking at this population. You’ve been a leader in our cry for the need for young programs, and now, delighted that you’ll be able to validate our needs for this program and others for older workers.

I hope you’re sending me everything. I really am very anxious to take a look at it. And let me tell you, your information on how this low-income population of seniors has fared in the recession is really eye-opening, really important for us to hear. And again, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your work.

MS. GREENLEE: Andy, this is Kathy Greenlee. Would you also submit your comments directly to us at AOA as well? Because we’re providing all the ancillary services that go with the supported employment. So your numbers were impressive, and I’d like to be able to get them directly.

MS. OATES: And then you’ll have another fan. I don’t know how many fans you want in government at one time. It could keep you working 24 hours a day, instead of 20 that you’re actually doing now.

MR. GONZALEZ: And let me ask, do we have anyone else on the phone?

OPERATOR: No, apparently, we have no other comments queued up on the phone.

MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. I just want to point out that if you hit 7 on your phone’s keypad, you’ll be able to jump onto the phone with our presenters. But if there’s no one on the phone line, I think we’re going to go into the wrap-up of today’s listening session, and I’ll turn things over to Grace Kilbane. Grace?

MS. KILBANE: Yeah, thanks, Gary. And I think it's been very impressive – the thoughtfulness of the comments that both our colleagues and – (inaudible) – have shared with us today. And it's been a really great experience and we thank you for joining us. I would like to basically turn the program back over to our assistant secretaries so that they can do a little bit of a wrap-up from their perspective, from this session. And then they'll close it out.

OPERATOR: Pardon me. This is the operator. We did just get a question on the phone. Do we have time to take it?

MS. KILBANE: Sure.

OPERATOR: Yes, then our next phone comment comes in from Jerry – (inaudible) – from the Wilkes Barre area on aging. Please go ahead.

Q: Very good with the name there. Okay, thank you. I want to make a comment to the gentleman who just spoke, about all the statistics. And I'm also in agreement, where we either raise the limits to 200 percent, like they did for some of the other federal programs, like Foster Grandparents, in order to make more people qualified for the program, or lower the age – he said 52, but I was willing to go as low as 50.

We have a direct-care worker program right now in Pennsylvania with NCOA. I just happen to have both sides – (inaudible) – and NCOA. And what happened is, we were able to go in up to age 50 for that program. Did we get a lot of responses? Yes, more than we did with people over the age of 55, believe it or not.

But that was just an editorial comment. The one I really want to hit home, is the Department of Labor holding the sites to making sure that the most needy ones are the ones that are being put on the program? Today's economy and the way today is right now, we have individuals who are professionals that are the most needy walking in our door. We're not getting the most needy that were there maybe 18 to 24 months ago. These are professional individuals that have Ph.D.s and teaching degrees, airplane pilots.

They are the most needy individuals in their homes. They can't make their mortgage payments. They don't have a dime to live on. Their unemployment is running out. So there's some mixed messages being sent by the Department of Labor, and holding and scrutinizing the sites and telling them, "you're not meeting your goals, you're not meeting your standards," but we're putting people on the program.

In my county, I was told by a career link (ph) last Friday that I have employed more people on our program than the entire county did with the Census. And so I don't know, do you want us to put people on the program that are the most needy? We can't find them. The people that are walking in our door, I'm considering, when they walk in our door, they are the most needy, whether they are homeless, whether they can't pay their mortgage, whether they have no income at all.

And we're being scrutinized by the Department of Labor with statistics from back in 2006 and 2007. Unemployment in my area is at 10 percent. We can't use the one categorization – (inaudible) – where it says about, being unemployment is at a high risk in your county – we can't use that because the Department of Labor's website for 2007 says we're at 6.5 (percent) when we're at 10.5. Thank you.

MS. OATES: Well, let me address a couple of your concerns about the Department of Labor. This is Jane Oates. First of all, we have to go by statutory guidelines. The statutory guidelines for SCSEP are established, and our job is to enforce them. So I recognize that in many parts of the country, the neediest people are not often the people that will come knocking on your door. I hope that you will do the same thing that we recommend that our one-stops do, and that's engage with community-based organizations and faith-based organizations.

Many times, the lowest-income, the neediest people go to their church or their synagogue, or their mosque. They go to a community-based organization that they have some familiarity with. And perhaps, if you're having difficulty getting people who don't have a Ph.D. or haven't been in a professional job to know about the SCSEP program, those community-based organizations may be very helpful.

I think Andy's words to us were kind of striking, when he said that if we did lower the age nationally, or if we did raise the income level to 200 percent, we would end up having 300 percent more people than we can currently serve right now. I think that, you know, we hear both of those comments, and I think our job is to figure out how we make sure that we're responding to the needs of the Wilkes Barre-Scranton area, you know, in terms of having a higher-educated population, more economically viable than, maybe, some other places in the country, you know.

And how do we balance that if we do get 300 percent more applicants, that we're not in areas where there are needier people, allowing them to be invisible and, yet, serving people who are more of means. This is really, maybe, one of the critical points that we're going to have to discuss as we move forward with reauthorization with our friends on Capitol Hill. What is the purpose of SCSEP? Is it to serve the hardest-to-serve people?

And if our workforce system is not working with those folks that our colleague from Wilkes Barre-Scranton brought up – if our one-stop system isn't working, well then we need to figure out why. So you have raised a great point here, and I think – I hope you hear that we don't have an answer, but you've certainly sparked some conversation, both at AOA and at ETA, about how we make sure that we're not excluding the people who are in need in certain communities.

MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Jerry. And do we have anyone else on the phone?

OPERATOR: Ah yes, we have one more comment queued up on the phone. And it comes from Kristal Ludov (ph) from – (inaudible). Kristal, please go ahead.

Q: Hi, thank you very much. Thank you for this opportunity for the dialogue, Secretary Oates and Assistant Secretary Greenlee. On behalf of – (inaudible) – community service is one

program. And I'd like to comment, on behalf of the rest of – some of the things that a few of my colleagues across the country have already. In regards to the WIA and the one-stop system coordination, I just wanted to kind of, again, thank you very much for the conversation, because there has been issues across the board with it, and there continue to be.

It would be helpful – and just a recommendation on the other half – if this exact information can be conveyed to the providers at the one-stop centers, regarding the coordination. A couple of years ago, there was a wonderful publication that came out – the “Protocol for Serving Older Workers.” A lot of times I go out in the field, I use this as a talking piece as well. Again, very helpful – it would be very helpful for us as we leverage administrative staff, resources and opportunities. Thank you very much.

MS. OATES: Thank you, Kristal.

MR. GONZALEZ: And, Doug, anyone else on the line?

OPERATOR: No, there are currently no comments in queue.

MR. GONZALEZ: Okay, the one thing I want to point out – you should be seeing, if you're still logged into the room, the e-mail address to this and Title V at DOL has been tweaked a little bit. We've lopped off a little bit. The original – titlevlisteningession@dol.gov - is not a functional e-mail address. It is titlevlisteningessi@dol.gov. So if you type “session,” we're not going to get it, so if you would, just chop off the “-on” at the end of “session,” and we'll see it once you send it. But I just wanted to point that out. Now, I'll turn things over to the secretary to wrap things up.

MS. OATES: Kathy, go first.

MS. GREENLEE: Okay, well I just want to say thank you. It's been interesting to do this webinar. You all have quite an interesting ability to take both comments online and on the phone, so it's been a great opportunity. And I just want to say to everybody on the phone that Jane and I both understand that this law is the whole law – that Title V is within the Older Americans Act, and we're moving forward on a joint project, which is the reauthorization – not my section or her section, but of the law.

And so we look forward to being able to, you know, coordinate both our responses and then our recommendations within the administration moving forward. But we're just getting started, and we will begin what we need to do within our agencies, and are starting to go there. But we have a year to go, and we need the support of all of you in the network to talk on behalf of the needs of seniors and older workers, but on behalf of the value of the program.

And we really count on you, as we move forward, to help us make this be the best program that it can be. And I look forward, Jane, to more work with you. It sounds like we can come back and tackle a WIA – (inaudible) – like we did this one, moving forward. So thank you.

MS. OATES: This has been great. And you know, I think Kathy and I have been chatting in between questions about next steps, so please know that we have a full menu of things that we're going to do. We hope that you'll stay engaged in this process. And you know, personally, I hope that you heard today that some people say one thing and somebody else comes out and says something exactly the opposite.

So we know, going into this process, that we are not going to be able to make every single person happy. What our goal, I think, is, is that we reach consensus on these points and that we're transparent and open about how we're reaching those opinions so that nobody feels like there was a backroom deal or that we listened to somebody with influence. You're the people with influence in this program.

We have a real commitment to figuring out what's the best policy moving forward. And we hope that this was just the beginning. We hope that you'll continue to send us ITS (ph), continue to invite us to events that you're having so that we can listen to your program participants, as well as the program directors. This is a really important program, and we're looking to just make it better. Thank you, Kathy. Thank you. Thank you, Grace. Thank you, Gary. All the people in the back room here, thank you.

MR. GONZALEZ: And I just want to wrap up by letting everyone know how you can actually access this recording. To do so, all you need to do is login to your Workforce3One account. Automatically, you'll be taken to your dashboard page, and under the "attendance" tab, you'll have access to the recording and today's transcripts.

The PowerPoint – there wasn't really any content there, so I don't know if we're going to be posting that. But what's going to really interest you is the recording and the transcript. The transcript's going to retain everything that was said over this whole conference line (ph), and that will be posted to the recording and the transcript in two business days. So look for that.

We also – (inaudible) – open the chat – the open chat for as long as there's an interaction. So if you are providing us with feedback or if you actually start communicating with your colleagues out in the field, we're going to leave this chat open for you for, like I said, as long as we see interaction. So with that, have a great day, everyone.

MS. GREENLEE: Thank you all.

MS. OATES: Thank you.

(END)