



April 15, 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

President

Irene B. Collins
Alabama

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Harkin, Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Cochran, Ranking Member Lewis, and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

Vice President

James Toews
Oregon

I write today on behalf of the National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA), our members, and the seniors, family caregivers, and persons with disabilities they serve. NASUA represents the 56 officially designated state and territorial agencies on aging. Each of our members oversees the implementation of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and many of our members serve as the operating agency in their states for Medicaid home and community based services (HCBS) waivers that serve older adults, and in some cases, individuals with disabilities.

Treasurer

Charles D. Johnson
Illinois

Secretary

Carol Sala
Nevada

We offer the following comments with respect to President Obama's FY 2011 Budget and the FY 2011 Labor Health and Human Services (LHHS) Appropriations bill, and their impact on the goals and implementation of the Older Americans Act, which is to provide older people and individuals with disabilities the opportunity to age with dignity and respect in their homes and communities.

Immediate Past President

Patricia A. Polansky
New Jersey

Older Americans Act

Past President

Kathy Leitch
Washington

The Older Americans Act (OAA) funds critical programs and services to keep older adults independent. Services provided through the OAA include Meals on Wheels and congregate meals, senior centers, home and community-based care, family caregiver support, prevention of elder abuse, older worker training and employment, transportation, the long term care ombudsman program, legal services, services for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, and research and training. **NASUA respectfully recommends a minimum 12% increase in LHHS Appropriations for the Older Americans Act.**

NASUA applauds the President's Caregiver Initiative, which was recently announced by the White House Task Force on Middle Class Families. The Caregiver Initiative includes **\$48 million for the OAA Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program; \$48 million in OAA Title III B supportive services; and \$4 million for Title VI Tribal caregiver and supportive services.** In addition, it recommends **appropriating an additional \$2.5 million for the Lifespan Respite program.**

While NASUA and its members are also thrilled with the President's proposal to increase the OAA funding by approximately \$108.4 million, 7.4 percent, it is still insufficient to address the demand for senior services. The economic downturn has impacted the ability of states to provide many of the OAA services; nearly 30% of states have reported cutting OAA programs in response to decreased funding. These program specific cuts, along with other, often cumulative, funding reductions, leaves consumers underserved. States are seeing a steady increase in service requests for OAA programs: nearly 80% of states are seeing increased requests for home delivered meals, and 50% report an uptick in congregate meal requests; over 70% of states are experiencing increased demand for transportation and personal care services. Yet, where demand is high, supply is low; nearly 75% of states report state unit budget reductions in both FY 2010 and FY 2011, and 61% plan to reduce funding for direct services to mitigate these budget cuts.

To account for years of stagnant funding and address the growing senior population and escalating demand for services, OAA funding would need to be increased by at least 12 percent in FY 2011. Additionally, because the OAA serves one of the most vulnerable populations affected by the economic crisis, **NASUA asks that Congress continue to make available American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)-level funding for nutrition.** By continuing this program, for the short term, it will allow states to build their capacity and prevent the "cliff effect" when states lack the resources to manage the increased demand in programs due to the economic crisis.

Health Care Reform

NASUA applauds Congress's goal of providing Americans with access to quality, affordable health insurance and applauds its inclusion of funding for disease prevention and health promotion in the strategy to keep Americans healthier and bend the cost curve. Now that the programs are authorized, the funding must be appropriated to implement this objective. **Fully funding the *Healthy Aging, Living Well* initiative in health reform would allow the roll out of these five year pilot programs** to evaluate risk, conduct interviews, and provide clinical referrals for those who are between 55 and 64 years of age. The Aging Network supports this initiative and stands ready to work with state health departments to implement many of these programs.

Elder Justice Act

NASUA and its members congratulate and support the enactment of the Elder Justice Act (EJA) as part of health care reform. The EJA demonstrates the nation's commitment to

the health and safety of older Americans by providing federal resources to support State and community efforts in preventing, detecting, treating, intervening in, and prosecuting elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Reports reveal that 500,000 to 5 million senior Americans will be victims of some form of abuse every year, causing illness, suffering, and premature death. In NASUA's most recent economic downturn survey of the state units on aging, administered in the fall of 2009, 52.3% of respondents reported that they were experiencing increased requests for Adult Protective Services (APS) that they believed were attributable to the economic downturn. This was up from a year prior when the November 2008 survey indicated that 33% of the 45 responding states and territories experienced a rise in calls to APS. In the November 2009 survey, 42.3% of states also reported an increase in requests for the Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs.

The Elder Justice Act would provide much needed support to state and local entities, which are on the front lines in combating this largely unknown, but growing problem. Among other things, the bill authorizes the first dedicated federal funding stream for APS in the form of grants to States in the amount of **\$100 million per year for four years (\$400 million)**. The bill also authorizes a total of **\$32.5 million over 4 years to support the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** and an additional **\$10 million per year (\$40 million total) in training programs** for national organizations and State long-term care ombudsman programs.

In total, the EJA authorized funding of approximately \$777 million over four years of which \$195 million is authorized for FY 2011. To ensure the Act's intent is realized, **Congress must fully fund the provisions authorized by the EJA in health reform.**

Economic Relief for Millions of Older Americans – \$250 Stimulus

The President's Budget proposes making \$250 payments to Social Security recipients, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. This injection of funds is meant to bolster the finances of Social Security beneficiaries in a year when they are not receiving the normal cost-of-living adjustment. This is the first year without a boost in Social Security payments since automatic increases for inflation began in 1975. Compounding the problem, senior's retirements and savings accounts have been decimated by the economic crisis and their home values have reduced substantially.

Although legislative proposals have been made in the House and the Senate, HR 3557 and HR 4213 respectively, neither have been taken up. **These badly needed \$250 Social Security payments would help 57 million seniors get the financial relief they need.**

Seniors Community Service Employment for Older Americans

SCSEP is authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act, and it offers low-income individuals who are 55 and older part-time, work-based training at non-profits or government agencies to prepare them for entry or re-entry into the workforce. The dual

goals of the program are to foster economic independence and to enhance community service activities. **NASUA urges congress to adopt FY 2010 level funding for FY 2011, \$825 million.** The President's FY 2011 request of \$600 million is a decrease in funding and should not be supported because this program is of vital importance when seniors are one of the most vulnerable populations falling victim to the economic crisis.

Social Services Block Grant

The President's budget provides level funding of \$1.7 million for Social Services Block Grants (SSBG). SSBG supports home and community-based care by providing transportation, congregate and home-delivered meals, in-home care, adult foster care and adult day services. Even with efficient utilization of SSBG funds, communities still have older adults on waiting lists for many essential supportive services. **Restoration of SSBG appropriations to the fully authorized amount of \$2.38 billion is long overdue and even more critical given the current economic situation and increased demand.**

Community Services Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) helps older Americans maintain their independence and remain engaged in their communities through initiatives such as home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, volunteer opportunities and transportation services. The President's FY 2011 budget proposes \$746,000 for CSBG. **Increased funding over FY 2010 levels for the CSBG program would allow states to better leverage limited resources to allow vulnerable seniors to age in their homes and communities.**

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The President's budget proposes a baseline funding amount for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) of \$3.3 billion. It also proposes a new LIHEAP trigger, which would release up to \$2 billion for energy assistance in response to energy price spikes and to changes in the number of households in poverty. **Full funding of at least the authorized amount of \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP is necessary to continue to assist the seniors and families during the economic crisis.**

Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program

The President's FY 2011 budget proposes to reduce funding for Section 202 programs by \$551 million, from \$825 million in FY 2010 to \$274 million FY 2011. This funding decrease is the result of a request from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to eliminate funding for new Section 202 projects so that it may prioritize its efforts and redesign its programs to more accurately reflect the population's needs. At a time when there are 10 seniors waiting for every unit that becomes available, an indefinite suspension of funding for affordable senior housing could have serious consequences for seniors. **Sustained investment in senior housing, at the very least, is necessary to meet the current and projected demand.**

Senior Transportation Programs

NASUA welcomes the President's priorities of transportation safety, placed-based development and the Administration's emphasis on Livable Communities. The President proposes an appropriation of \$527 million to support initiatives that integrate housing, transportation, and land use. **Dedicated funding for livable communities as well as enhanced funding for the Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled Program, the Section 5317 New Freedom Program, and the Section 5311 Rural and Small Urban Areas Program is key to enhancing the ability of older Americans and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities.**

State Health Insurance Assistance Program

The President's budget request of \$50 million community-based outreach services for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). This represents an increase of \$5 million from the FY 2010 appropriations. These funds will provide infrastructure, training and outreach support, to assist SHIPs as they provide counseling to beneficiaries on complex Medicare-related topics. **Enhanced funding for SHIP outreach services is especially critical for the implementation of health reform and Congress should consider an even greater investment than proposed in the President's budget.**

As you consider the FY 2011 Appropriations bills, we hope you will take into account the potential effect particular approaches will have on the State Units on Aging as well as the Aging Network as a whole and the seniors and caregivers we serve. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martha Roherty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martha Roherty
Executive Director