



June 12, 2008

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative Boehner:

On behalf of the National Association of State Units on Aging we urge you to oppose the Administration's proposed cut of \$265.235 million to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). This reduction is in addition to the Administration's budget request that already calls for a \$500 million cut; bringing the total proposed FY 2009 reductions to the SSBG to over \$765 million.

During the welfare reform debate of 1996 the Congress and the Governors agreed to reduce SSBG funding to \$2.38 billion for 5 years and then return it to its former level of \$2.8 billion in 2003. These reductions were agreed to at a time when members of both parties and both chambers were looking for avenues to balance the federal budget. SSBG made a significant contribution to deficit reduction and was to be restored to its full funding in 2003 when the fiscal condition improved. Unfortunately, the funding level was reduced even further in 1998 and is currently \$1.7 billion a year. The cuts and lack of funding to keep up with inflation over the last ten years have forced social services providers to discontinue services to children, families, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Many states rely on SSBG funds to support the aging services network. As you know, this network provides vital services for low-income seniors such as home delivered meals, transportation, home repairs and modifications, caregiver support. According to a recent survey of the state units on aging directors, the majority indicated that they have already had to make budget cuts to their programs as a result of state budget shortfalls. Most of the states indicated that they have not yet had to cut direct service programs. States are also seeing a decline in the number of volunteers that support the programs due to the high cost of gasoline. Therefore, any additional cuts to this vital network would have a serious negative consequence to the nation's most vulnerable citizens.

Therefore, we strongly encourage you to reject the Administration's reduction to this critical source of funding for our most vulnerable citizens.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia A. Polansky". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Patricia A. Polansky, President

President
Patricia A. Polansky
New Jersey

1st Vice President
Irene Collins
Alabama

2nd Vice President
James Toews
Oregon

Secretary
Carol Sala
Nevada

Treasurer
Charles D. Johnson
Illinois

Past President
Kathy Leitch
Washington