



Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

May 12, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services and Education
Room 2358-B Rayburn House Office
Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

As your Subcommittees develop your FY 2011 Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bills, the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), a coalition of 60 national not-for-profit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older adults, urge you to provide full first year funding for the Elder Justice Act, which was included in the final health care reform bill signed by President Obama. By appropriating these funds, Congress will have substantially improved the nation's ability to combat elder abuse, neglect and exploitation as well as to protect the health of older adults.

The Elder Justice Act has authorized funding of approximately \$777 million over four years. We strongly recommend that an appropriation of \$195 million for FY 2011 be included in the Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill.

The funding would have a direct and immediate impact by providing urgently needed support for state and local governments for adult protective services (APS), the front line of fighting elder abuse. Of the APS agencies in 30 states responding to a recent national survey of APS programs, 60% reported their budgets had been cut an average of 14%, while two-thirds reported an average increase of 24% in reports of abuse. In the Elder Justice Act, \$100 million is authorized for APS programs for FY 2011.

Funding for the Elder Justice Act would also provide much needed support for long-term care ombudsmen at the state and local levels who respond to complaints of abuse and neglect in the nation's long-term care facilities. The number of very complex cases being referred to long-

term care ombudsmen has been steadily increasing. Furthermore, there continues to be a very disturbing increase in the frequency and severity of regulatory agency citations for egregious violations by long-term care providers. Ombudsmen are needed now more than ever in nursing homes, board and care facilities, and in assisted living communities.

Elder abuse is a very serious health issue. According to research funded by the National Institute of Justice, almost 11% of people age 60 and older, or 5.7 million individuals, suffered from some form of abuse in 2009 alone. Other studies have shown that elder victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation have three times the risk of dying prematurely.

The Elder Justice Act promotes the safety and well-being of older adults and their families. We urge you to fully fund the Elder Justice Act for FY 2011.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Retired Americans
American Society on Aging (ASA)
Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores (ANPPM), *National Association for Hispanic Elderly*
Association of BellTel Retirees, Inc.
Center for Medicare Advocacy (CMA)
Easter Seals
Gray Panthers
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA)
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers (NANASP)
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)
National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM)
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged (NCBA)
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)
National Council on Aging (NCOA)
National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)
Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)
The Gerontological Society of America (GSA)
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care (NCCNHR)
OWL, The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Volunteers of America
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)