



AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN
ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS
Week of February 28, 2011

In Lansing next week . . . public testimony on aging programs will be heard by legislators on Community Health Subcommittees in the House of Representatives. Advocates will be speaking out about cuts in Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) programs. A hearing is scheduled on March 7, from 9 am – 4 pm in Room 352 of the State Capitol (except for an hour lunch break at noon). The House DCH Subcommittee is chaired by Representative Matt Lori, and includes Bob Genetski, Peter MacGregor, Dave Agema, Rashida Tlaib and Joan Bauer.

More details have come out about the administration's proposed cut of \$15 million in the Medicaid Home Help program. It appears that the Home Help cut would be made by eliminating all clients who only require help with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs). In other words, in order to qualify for the program, an applicant must need help with at least one Activity of Daily Living. At this time, it is not known how many clients this would affect.

Also in the Governor's FY 2012 budget – implementation of an estate recovery policy for individuals receiving Medicaid-funded long term care. It is assumed that several million dollars in revenue will be gleaned for next year. In past years, estate recovery has generated a strong pushback from older Michigianians, but this year the Governor's proposal of taxing pension income has attracted all the attention. In fact, AARP is planning an "It's Not Fair!" rally against the Governor's proposal on March 15 from 11 am to 1 pm at the East Steps of the State Capitol.

Award-winning actor Mickey Rooney . . . was the face of elder abuse in America this week as he testified on his own experience before the Senate Select Committee on Aging. Rooney says he was abused by his wife's children - his step-son and step-daughter - who stole \$400,000, withheld food, medications and mail, and only allowed him enough money to buy a pair of shoes. Rooney's testimony succeeded in making this largely hidden problem a prime time story, demonstrating that abuse affects older Americans at all income and social levels. Rooney's testimony can be seen at <http://changingaging.org> by clicking the link on the right. Aging advocates in Michigan are hoping this national attention will spur action on elder abuse legislation that has languished here.

While there isn't an approved federal budget yet for this year . . . President Obama's budget recommendations for 2012 have been released and include both increases and decreases in selected Older Americans Act programs. New funding is recommended for: Title III B supportive services (13% over FY 2010); National Family Caregiver Programs (25%); Lifespan Respite (from \$3 million to \$10 million); Title VI Native American programs (31%); and the Long Term Care Ombudsman (24%). Cuts are suggested for the Title V senior employment program (45%) and Title IV research and demonstrations. In other changes, the President wants to move two existing programs to the Administration on Aging, namely the Title V senior employment program and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (in Michigan, known as MMAP). First time funding for Adult Protective Services and the CLASS program would also be positioned within the AoA.

Included with this edition is an advocacy alert from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging regarding cuts proposed for this year by Congressional Republicans affecting Older Americans Act programs. Please contact Senators Stabenow and Levin asap!

ADVOCACY ALERT 2/23/2011

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

House Passes FY 2011 CR with Significant Program Cuts; Senate Expected to Take Up New Short-Term CR Next Week

Early this past Saturday, the House of Representatives passed the latest version of a comprehensive FY 2011 spending bill (H.R. 1) that would trim more than \$60 billion from the federal government's FY 2010 discretionary budget. The House bill, which was written by the Republican majority and passed by a vote of 235-198, now moves to the Democratic-led Senate, where Democrats have raised concerns about the bill's approach to cutting discretionary spending programs. H.R. 1 includes cuts to many programs critical to older adults including the Administration on Aging's (AoA) budget, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) under the Department of Labor, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and Senior Corps, among others. House leaders have yet to clarify how the \$65 million in cuts to AoA would be realized, so n4a is unable to provide further details on this particular proposed reduction over FY 2010, but is continuing to press for answers.

With the current funding for government programs set to lapse on March 4, a number of politically divisive issues attached to the H.R. 1 (such as defunding implementation of the health care reform law) and the House and Senate both in recess this week, it is expected that another short-term continuing resolution (CR) will be needed before the two chambers can finish negotiations on a final CR for the remainder of FY 2011. This process could be complicated, however, by differences over whether spending cuts should be included in this shorter-term "stopgap" CR. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) has announced his intention to pursue a one-month stopgap CR at current spending levels (FY 2010) when the Senate returns next week. Meanwhile, House Republican leaders have expressed their desire to include spending cuts in any short-term CR.

Contact Your Senators:

With the debate surrounding FY 2011 appropriations now moving to the Senate, it is critical that all AAAs and Title VI programs contact their Senators to encourage them to oppose harmful cuts to AoA's budget, as well as other key programs like SCSEP, LIHEAP and Senior Corps. Reaching your Senators during this brief recess period is critical, as the larger debate continues outside of Washington, and will affect how the Senate responds next week.

Action Requested:

Contact your Senators and ask them to oppose H.R. 1 and any spending cuts that would have a detrimental effect on programs for older Americans. Take the time to localize the funding cuts in terms of what they mean for the older adults in your part of the state (e.g., jobs lost, meals reduced, rides not available, etc.), as these messages are most important to your elected officials. (While it is also important to contact House Members about the effect H.R. 1 would have on the older adults you serve, the priority right now is reaching out to Senators.)

STEP 1: Fax or email the state and DC offices of your Senators. If emailing, go to

www.senate.gov to find your Senators' web pages, where there is usually an email form for constituent comments.

STEP 2: Use the sample letter below to craft your message to your Senators, being sure to localize the issues.

STEP 3: Share any feedback you receive as a result of your contacts with your Senators with n4a policy staff.

Ask other advocates to do the same! Urge colleagues, advisory board members, volunteers and clients to make calls to their Senators, as well.

Sample Letter:

Dear Senator [LAST NAME]: I am writing with serious concerns about H.R. 1, the appropriations measure recently passed by the House of Representatives and soon to be considered by the Senate. H.R. 1 contains destructive cuts that would negatively affect the ability of older Americans to remain healthy and independent in their communities.

Specifically, the [AGENCY NAME] is concerned about a \$65 million cut to the Administration on Aging's (AoA) budget, a cut of \$525 million to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) under the Department of Labor, the cutting of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by \$400 million, and the elimination of funding for Senior Corps programs.

Here in [reference your part of the STATE or county], our Area Agency on Aging provides [ADD A LINE ABOUT YOUR AGENCY, SHOWING THE SCOPE OF WORK AND WHO YOU SERVE].

The \$65 million cut to AoA, for example, would mean reverting to pre-FY 2009 funding levels. Once that is translated to our area, it means a roughly [X] percent cut to our already lean and shrinking budgets for serving older adults through the Older Americans Act. This percentage cut would reduce... [PROVIDE EXAMPLES LIKE FEWER MEALS SERVED, RIDES TO THE DOCTOR, OR HOME AIDE HOURS].

As you are aware [YOUR STATE] is facing severe budget problems. Already, the [YOUR COUNTY OR PSA] share of the [STATE OAA COUNTERPART, if applicable]—a state fund source modeled after the Older Americans Act—has been cut by [SPECIFIC DOLLAR AMOUNT]. More cuts may be on the way. This is happening in the face of an unprecedented “age wave,” and given the current economic climate, as more and more of our area's aging baby boomers and older adults need assistance to remain independent.

[PROVIDE additional specifics for other programs proposed for cuts in H.R. 1, such as older adults you won't be able to serve through SCSEP if funding is halved, or how the loss of all Senior Corps funds would affect your community.]

If these cuts are allowed to move forward, older adults will no longer have access to services in their own home through the Older Americans Act, which are less expensive and preferred to institutional care. The [NAME OF AGENCY] urges you to vote against H.R. 1 in its current form, and fight to retain full funding for these critical programs to older Americans in our state.