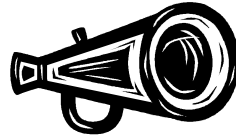




ACTION ALERT!



***Seniors in Today's
Economy***

Update

Government Affairs

January 2009

Over 94 million Americans aged 50 and older who are approaching retirement or already retired have been greatly impacted by the slumping economy according to the Urban Institute. Seniors on low and fixed incomes are being dealt the harshest blow, suffering increased costs due to higher food, home energy and health care costs. Social service agencies are being flooded with calls from frail elders who are worried about how they'll make ends meet on Social Security checks and meager savings during the cold winter months. Many seniors are faced with gut-wrenching and unacceptable solutions to their economic situations: They are splitting pills or deciding not to refill prescriptions. They're missing doctors' appointments, skipping needed dental work, or canceling home-care services. While the value of a dollar may be diminishing, the value of our aging senior population is not. It is time to return our gratitude to older Americans by adequately funding programs and services that serve our seniors.



Talking Points for Alliance Activists

Impact of Today's Economy on Seniors:

- One out of every 10 senior citizens is living in poverty.
- Compared to a year ago, people now pay 26% more for milk, 40% more for eggs, 50% more for beef, and 100% more for cheese.
- Over the last 12 months, retirement accounts have lost over 18 percent of their value.
- The rate of bankruptcy among those ages 65 and older has more than doubled since 1991.
- Soaring health care costs are hitting seniors at a time when more employers are cutting back on retiree medical and pension benefits.
- Many elderly men and women have stopped going out, increasing their isolation at home and the potential for depression or neglect.
- The housing crisis has kept thousands of older Americans who need support and care from moving into retirement communities or assisted-living centers, effectively stranding them in their own homes.
- Residents who rely on fuel oil for heat are expecting to pay 38 percent more to heat their homes this year over last, while those who rely on natural gas can expect their bills to rise 7 percent.



Sample Questions to Ask your Members of Congress

A. Home Energy Costs

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program LIHEAP is the cornerstone of government efforts to help needy seniors and families avoid hypothermia in the winter and heat stress (even death) in the summer. For vulnerable seniors, LIHEAP makes a real difference in their ability to address high home energy costs. This year, LIHEAP applications have reached record levels and are projected to increase by about 1.5 million or 25 percent over last year's levels.

- Will you support legislation that will provide \$2.5 billion in supplemental funding to allow states to reach out to the newly unemployed and help these families pay their home heating and cooling bills during this period of economic crisis?

B. Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act (OAA) authorizes and funds the Administration on Aging and all of its programs, including Meals on Wheels, senior centers, senior transportation, caregiver support programs, housing assistance and in-home services for frail elderly. Regardless of its success, funding for OAA and its many programs has not even kept up with inflation, let alone the increasing demand for services. As a result unmet needs and growing waiting lists for services exist throughout the country. Without immediate attention, this flat funding of OAA will result in severe cutbacks in aging services to our senior community.

- Will you support at least a 12% increase in funding for the OAA in FY 2010?

C. Affordable Housing for Low-Income Seniors

The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program was enacted to allow seniors to live with dignity by providing assistance with housing and supportive services. The problems of low-income seniors facing multi-year housing assistance waiting lists are only exacerbated by the shrinking supply of suitable, affordable housing.

- Will you support legislation, such as the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act of 2009 that will invest in affordable housing to ensure that seniors can find the affordable, safe and secure housing that they deserve?

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