



Issue Brief **The President's Caregiver Initiative**

Background:

In January, President Obama included a Caregiver Initiative as part of his FY 2011 proposal and Vice President Biden's *White House Task Force on the Middle Class*, stating that the Caregiver Initiative will ease the burden on families with elder care responsibilities and allow seniors to live in the community for as long as possible. Under the proposal:

- Funding for the **National Family Caregiver Support Program** – Title III E of the Older Americans Act (OAA) – would increase by \$48 million. The extra funding will allow nearly 200,000 additional caregivers to be served and 3 million more hours of care to be provided.
- Title III B of the OAA regarding **Supportive Services and Senior Centers** would increase by \$48 million. These funds could be used for an array of services to promote independence, including: adult day care, transportation, disease prevention, home health, retirement counseling, and a variety of senior center programs. The nationwide network of senior centers--many of which are funded under Title III B of the OAA--are the backbone of community-based services, providing programs to promote seniors' health, nutrition, independence, dignity, and social contact.
- The **Lifespan Respite Care** program would receive \$2.5 million in additional funding. Respite, the most frequently requested support service, has been shown to provide family caregivers with the relief necessary to maintain their own health, bolster family stability, keep marriages intact, and avoid or delay more costly nursing home placements.

Proposal:

NCOA urges Congress to adopt the increases proposed by the Caregiver Initiative in the FY 2011 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations legislation.

Rationale:

- An estimated 38 million Americans (23 million with jobs) provide unpaid care to an aging relative. *Caregiving in the U.S. 2009*, funded by the MetLife Foundation on behalf of the Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, found that 29 percent of the U.S. adult population (65.7 million people) are caregivers, and are caring for adults, the elderly or children with special needs. These caregivers provide an average of 20 hours of care per week.
- Supporting caregivers will strengthen the economy. Absenteeism and caregiving responsibilities contribute to \$17 to \$34 billion in lost productivity annually for American businesses.
- These services are often key factors in allowing families to stay together and keep relatives out of nursing homes. A University of Michigan study found that a person without a primary caregiver is almost five times more likely to be recommended for nursing home placement than a person with a caregiver. Since institutional care has been shown to be more expensive than home and community-based care, this initiative would likely help reduce overall Medicare and Medicaid spending.
- The challenges of family caregiving in an aging society are a reality of daily life for millions of baby boomers confronted with the challenge of providing or seeking care for their parents, spouses, and other loved ones. Caregiving often imposes enormous physical, financial and emotional burdens on those providing care. The Administration's Caregiver Initiative will make important strides toward relieving these enormous burdens for middle class families throughout the nation.

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