

Congressional Supercommittee Fails to Reach Consensus Good and Bad News for Older Adult Programs

The Congressional “supercommittee” reached the November 23 deadline without coming up with a recommendation to reduce the nation’s federal deficit. The full Congress can now develop and pass its own plan to find \$1.2 trillion in savings before the holiday recess, but that is unlikely to happen. As a result, automatic spending cuts, known as sequestration, will kick in beginning January 2013. Programs facing automatic cuts include Older Americans Act (OAA), Senior Corps, Section 202 Housing, and Community Development Block Grants. Social Security and Medicaid will not be affected, but Medicare providers may see a 2% reduction in the rate of increase in their payment rates.

According to Amy Gotwals of National Association on Area Agencies on Aging, early estimates of the spending cuts have been placed as high as 8-9% across-the-board. But the level of cuts to programs *within* an agency, the Administration on Aging for example, may vary. In addition, this summer’s debt deal included placing spending caps on discretionary programs like OAA. Automatic cuts will be taken from capped levels. **At the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, an 8% cut to Older Americans Act programs is valued at an estimated \$800,000.**

The sequestration calls for cuts to be shared equally by discretionary and defense programs, but some congressional members fear such severe cuts to defense spending would be too harmful to the nation’s security. Congress has the authority to modify the terms of sequestration. Michigan’s two Representatives on the supercommittee, Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph) and Dave Camp (R - Midland) emphasized that debt reduction would continue under sequestration, despite the chance that the mix of spending cuts to reach the required \$1.2 billion savings over ten years may change.

Federal Funding for 2012 Approved in Batches

Three of the twelve appropriations bills that fund federal government programs for FY 2012 have been signed, and a second continuing resolution (CR) was passed to cover the remaining nine bills. The latest CR runs through December 16, and Congress hopes to pass one final large “omnibus” bill by that date. Funding for senior housing programs was finalized on November 18. Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Section 202 Housing for the Elderly was cut \$14.6 million (6%). But language was added back in the Conference Report that makes it easier for *MI Choice* participants to use HUD Section 8 vouchers in certain assisted living settings. The AAA 1-B worked with federal representatives to return the language after it had been excluded in the House-approved bill. Special thanks go to Congressman Gary Peters (D-Bloomfield Hills) and Senator Carl Levin (D) and their knowledgeable staffs for their assistance.

Most of the funding for OAA programs is included in the Department of Health and Human Services budget still being debated. At risk is the much-needed increase in funding for two programs proven to have cost-saving preventative effects: Falls Prevention and Chronic Disease Self-Management. AAA 1-B has sent letters to its Representatives, urging them to accept the Senate Appropriations recommendation for a \$10 million investment in each of these programs.

Michigan Quality Community Care Council (MQC3) At Work Despite Elimination in State Funding

Advocates for the Michigan Quality Community Care Council (MQC3) are speaking out in support of this public-private partnership that helps seniors and persons with disabilities remain in their own homes and receive high-quality care through the state's *Home Help* program. Funding for MQC3 was eliminated from the FY 2012 state budget and has since been operating with donor contributions. MQC3 officials are working with senior and disability rights organizations to find additional longer-term sources of revenue. MQC3 provides training, criminal background checks, and individualized matching service between a *Home Help* recipient and a potential worker. According to the Michigan Homecare Coalition, helping just 25 *Home Help* recipients remain in their own homes for a year rather than in a nursing home would fund all of MQC3's activities for a year. In addition, MQC3 has identified wrongly paid unemployment claims, resulting in \$1.4 million being reimbursed to the state. Michigan Homecare Coalition emphasizes that MQC3 does not require anyone who provides services through the program to join a union or pay union dues.



Advocates' Holiday Wish: Pass Elder Abuse Bills

Advocates throughout Michigan are calling for the state House of Representatives to pass a series of elder abuse bills before year end. The Senate passed the bi-partisan package of bills and now the House has its turn to act. This month throughout Region 1-B, supporters of elder abuse protections are mobilizing, sending letters and e-mails to legislators and calling on the public to spread the word that abusing vulnerable adults is a crime and will not be tolerated in Michigan.

Send a Holiday Card!

This holiday season is an ideal time to reach out to your State Representative with a note of thanks for their service as well as a request to pass these important elder abuse bills. Send your own card or print the special "There's no place like a safe home for the holidays" card found on the AAA 1-B website at <http://www.aaa1b.com/advocacy/>. Send a card to the committee chairmen as well.

Mail cards to:

The Honorable (Full Name of Representative)
State Representative
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Where the Bills Are....

Families, Children and Seniors Committee

Rep. Kenneth Kurtz, Chair (Bills 454, 455, 457, 459, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 706, 777)

Banking and Financial Services Committee

Rep. Marty Knollenberg, Chair (Bills 456, 460, 604, and 605)

Detailed descriptions of each bill can be found at www.legislature.mi.gov. For a paper copy of the bill descriptions, contact Ann Langford at (248) 262-1282.