

THE ELDER JUSTICE COALITION

A NATIONAL ADVOCACY VOICE FOR ELDER JUSTICE IN AMERICA
JOHN B. BREAUX, HONORARY CHAIR ♦ ROBERT B. BLANCATO, NATIONAL COORDINATOR

April 12, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin:

As your Subcommittee considers the FY 2011 Labor/HHS appropriations bills, the non-partisan, 622-member Elder Justice Coalition, urges you to provide first year funding for the Elder Justice Act that was included in the final health care reform bill signed by President Obama. By doing so, the nation will have substantially improved our ability to better 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.

Its most direct and immediate impact would provide 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 FY2011.

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 ombudsman has been steadily increasing. As well, 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 ages 60 and older, or 5.7 million, suffered from some form of abuse within the past year 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,



Robert B. Blancato
National Coordinator