



January 2010

## THE ADVOCATE

### 2009 the Year in Review:

#### A Year of Challenges for Senior Advocates

2009 was a very challenging year for advocates seeking public policies and resources that strengthen our ability to respond to the needs of older adults. Despite some significant disappointments, there were some areas of progress. And with the economic recession bottoming out, the mood for 2010 looks more promising.

##### Setbacks

- The state budget: The Office of Services to the Aging budget received a cut in June (16% annualized), and another 14% cut of \$5.3 million in FY 2010 which began October 1, 2009. Approximately 6,000 fewer older Michigianians will receive help as a result.
- Elder abuse legislation: Not a single piece of legislation called for in the 2006 Governor's Task Force on Elder Abuse report has been adopted by the Michigan legislature. Eight bills have passed the House, but have not been acted upon by the Senate.
- Medicaid: Many providers are absorbing an 8% reimbursement rate cut, while nursing homes face a 4% cut.
- Many more programs have joined the list of services that have been completely eliminated, including many prevention programs funded with tobacco settlement dollars.

##### Progress

- MI Choice: The program received a \$17 million increase, primarily to continue nursing facility transitions. The new effort to serve consumers in licensed assisted living settings was initiated.
- Older Americans Act: Congress provided a \$37 million increase for FY 2010, which includes an additional \$19 million for nutrition programs and \$10 million for social services nationwide.
- National health reform: Key benefit enhancements for older adults have been included in the congressional proposals, including closing the Medicare Part D donut hole, and enhancing long term care services through inclusion of the CLASS Act and Community Choices Act provisions.

##### Strengthening Our Advocacy Together

- AAA 1-B Senior Advocacy Network: Membership grew to over 300. Quarterly meetings were initiated with December's forum on Project 2020 delivered by state aging director Sharon Gire.
- Presence in Lansing and Washington: AAA 1-B staff met with state and federal elected officials more than 270 times in 2009.
- Older Michigianians Day (OMD): Over 450 advocates participated in a successful 2009 OMD in Lansing, and hundreds more attended the six local OMD rallies in Region 1-B counties.
- Key to Independence advocacy campaign: While this campaign did not stop state cuts, it achieved tremendous visibility in Lansing, and many other regions of the state joined in.



## Kudos to Legislators with Perfect Attendance



In 2009, 42 legislators, including 17 from Region 1-B, had the distinction of having perfect voting attendance records according to a report completed by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. The Area on Aging 1-B would like to express its congratulations and appreciation to the following legislators who never missed a vote in 2009:

Rep. Vicki Barnett (Farmington Hills); Rep. Lisa Brown (West Bloomfield); Rep. Hugh Crawford (Novi); Rep. Cindy Denby (Fowlerville); Rep. Jennifer Haase (Richmond); Rep. Harold Haugh (Roseville); Rep. Lesia Liss (Warren); Rep. Pete Lund (Shelby Twp.); Rep. Sarah Roberts (St. Clair Shores); Rep. Jon Switalski (Warren); Rep. Kathy Angerer (Dundee); Rep. Marty Knollenberg (Troy); Rep. Phil Pavlov (St. Clair); and Rep. Tory Rocca (Sterling Heights).

In the Senate, the following recorded perfect voting records: Sen. Mike Bishop (Rochester); Sen. Randy Richardville (Frenchtown Twp.); and Sen. Alan Sanborn (Richmond).

## On the Senior Advocacy Radar for 2010

- President Obama is challenging Congress to finish work on national health reforms by early February so it can be addressed in his State of the Union address. A comprehensive 14 page accounting and comparison of provisions in the House and Senate leadership bills affecting older adults and adults with a disability was published by the SCAN Foundation, and is available on their web site at [www.thescanfoundation.org](http://www.thescanfoundation.org). For advocates who do not have access to email, call Jim McGuire at (248) 262-9216, leave your name and address, and a copy will be printed and mailed to you.
- Save the date for Older Michiganians Day on June 10 at the capitol in Lansing. If you are interested in representing the AAA 1-B at this event, call Jim McGuire at (248) 262-9216.
- The AAA 1-B completed its strategic plan in 2009, and as a result, the agency will develop its first-ever annual Advocacy Platform in 2010. All advocates and stakeholders will be invited to become involved in this process. Stay tuned for more information
- Some good and bad news on the state budget: The January revenue estimating conference projects that the state budget will remain balanced for the rest of FY 2010. Therefore the expected mid-year executive cuts should not be necessary. However, for 2011 there is a projected deficit of \$1.6 billion, partly because the current year budget was balanced with \$1.1 billion in federal stimulus funds that will not be available again. Thus, another painful state budget battle will begin in February with debate continuing over possible cuts, revenue enhancements, and government/taxation reforms.