

Advocacy Action Needed on State Elder Abuse Bills

Legislative committees are hard at work in Lansing finalizing a package of elder abuse bills. Lawmakers from both parties feel confident that 2011 will be the year that laws to protect vulnerable older adults are passed.

Advocates are encouraged to contact legislators and remind them that elder abuse is a crime and must be prevented. Approximately 80,000 Michigan seniors fall victim to some form of abuse each year, either physical, emotional or financial. Last year, Adult Protective Services received 19,000 calls reporting abuse, up 58% from the previous year. Seventy percent of abusers are “trusted” individuals including spouses, children, grandchildren and friends. Victims come from all walks of life and Michigan’s high rate of unemployment has fueled the financial exploitation of seniors.

Area Agency on Aging 1-B will engage in direct advocacy with legislators and will assist the region’s older adults and advocates touched by elder abuse who wish to share their stories. Please contact Advocacy Specialist Ann Langford at (248) 262-1282 if you wish to speak out on elder abuse or contact your state legislator directly by clicking the AAA 1-B web site’s [Contact Your Lawmaker](#).

Two Michigan Congressmen on Deficit-Reduction Committee



U.S. Rep. Dave Camp

Two Michigan Congressmen, Rep. Dave Camp (R-Midland) and Rep. Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph) have been named to the 12 member bi-partisan committee which will identify upwards of \$1.2 trillion in long term savings to the federal budget. The committee has until November 23 to craft and agree upon a proposal of spending cuts, revenue increases or a combination of both. Everything is on the table including key programs that support older adults: Older Americans Act programs, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Without an agreement or if Congress does not vote to accept the committee’s recommendation, automatic across-the-board spending cuts worth \$1.2 trillion will take place in 2013.



U. S. Rep. Fred Upton

At a recent forum in Kalamazoo sponsored by the Kalamazoo County Advocates for Senior Issues, Rep. Upton spoke to over 200 people eager to hear how he will represent the interests of seniors on the committee. Upton stated that he is a strong proponent of the Older Americans Act and that taxpayer money can be saved when individuals can live in their own homes. Upton supports home and community-based care through Medicaid and is against cutting benefits for individuals who currently receive Social Security and Medicare-funded health care. Regarding taxes, Upton feels tax reform is long overdue and he thinks this Congress will be successful in enacting reforms.

Advocacy 101: Refresher Course

Now that summer recesses are ending, lawmakers will head back to their Capitol offices to resume a busy legislative calendar. In Washington, DC Congress will finalize FY 2012 spending priorities through the appropriations process, hear testimony on the value of Older Americans Act programs in preparation for its reauthorization and prepare to take a position on the recommendations of the bi-partisan Congressional committee convened to address the nation's growing budget deficit. With federal programs that serve and provide a safety net for older adults at risk of funding cuts, senior advocates have their work cut out for them as well.

Elected officials need to hear thoughtful, reasoned opinions from informed advocates in order to cast votes that best represent the values and priorities of the people they serve. So in the spirit of the back-to-school season, here are some tips to help you prepare to contact your local, state and national representatives.

- **Be informed.** Before contacting your elected official, take the time to familiarize yourself with the bill or issue that concerns you. However, you do not have to be an expert.
- **Identify who you are and what group you represent.** Include your full name, address, phone number and e-mail address.
- **Accept meetings with staff.** Frequently you will be directed to a staff member and this can prove to be equally or more productive than meeting with the lawmaker personally.
- **Be specific and concise.** Explain why you are meeting, calling or writing. Prepare 1 or 2 talking points to focus your message. If you can, refer to a piece of legislation by its name or number. Also, cite sources of independent support for your position.
- **Be personal and use your own words.** Tell your story and explain how you, your family, neighbors or community has been affected by the issue you are discussing. Explain the consequences that adverse action or failure to act will have. Be prepared to answer questions or follow up at a later time with additional information.
- **Ask for a response.** Urge the official to take action and request a reply.
- **Extend thanks.** Regardless of the outcome of the contact, thank the official or staff member for his or her time and consideration of your concern.
- **Be courteous.** E-mail and phone calls warrant the same level of formality as a written letter.

U.S. Senators and Representatives: (202) 224-3121

Give the Operator your zip code and you will be connected to his or her Washington, DC office.
Or click on the AAA 1-B web site's [Contact Your Federal Lawmaker](#).

Michigan State Senators: (517) 373-2400

State Representatives: (517) 373-0135

Or click on the AAA 1-B website's [Contact Your State Lawmaker](#).



The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties. For more information about the Senior Advocacy Network (SAN) or to receive future editions of The Advocate, contact Ann Langford at (248) 262-1282 or alangford@aaa1b.com.