



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL ON AGING
2013 Legislative Priorities

Members of the State Council on Aging (SCOA) recognize the severity of fiscal constraints facing the Governor and Legislators as they continue to work to address the state budget crisis. As we advocate for seniors, the State Council on Aging wants to prevent the further erosion of services and ensure the continuation of cost savings by following these key principles and values:

- ☑ **Support for a balanced approach that includes strategies to increase revenue; NOT an ‘all-cuts’ budget.** An all-cuts approach has brought the State to the brink of shredding the safety net.
- ☑ **Support for Affordable Care Act initiatives that are cost efficient and driven by our shared core values.** Take full advantage of the expansion of the Medicaid program to support the 300,000 without services.
- ☑ **Protect the most vulnerable seniors and citizens with disabilities. Prioritize funding to protect those receiving services.** By "vulnerable", we mean people who are low income as defined by the Elder Economic Security Standard Index (ESSI) and rural elderly Washingtonians. Focus on those who are unable to care for themselves or do not have family caregiver support to assist in carrying out essential daily activities.
- ☑ **Protect funding that helps seniors remain in their home or a community-based setting.**
 - ▶ **No more cuts to the State Senior Citizens Services Act (SCSA).** SCSA has already sustained very challenging cuts. SCSA has proven cost effectiveness and is integral to helping the Area Agencies on Aging deliver a number of local community programs and services, e.g. congregate and home-delivered meals, information and assistance, caregiver respite, and transportation.
 - ▶ **Support Family Caregiver programs.** Protect the gains made in support of family caregivers; this keeps people in their own homes and out of costly institutional care.
- ☑ **Protect Washington’s investment in home and community services by maintaining and protecting the current cost effective long term care infrastructure.** Washington has been a national leader by providing its people the choice to receive cost effective services in their own homes or community settings relying less on institutional facilities. Investing in home and community-based care continues to be more cost effective, in economic and human terms, than high cost Medicaid nursing home care, other than as a last resort.

Plan for the Future. The Silver Tsunami has already arrived. Each agency should have a plan for the increase in services and movement toward Livable Communities.

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- *Members are appointed by the Governor and Area Agency on Aging Advisory Councils and are charged with advising the Governor, the DSHS Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of ADSA. (RCW 43.20A.695)*
- *This connection brings the State Council on Aging inside perspective on matters concerning seniors and people with disabilities.*
- *We have a statewide perspective and speak as one voice.*
- *Members are representative of local communities, from Area Agencies on Aging Advisory Councils, cities & counties, the legislature, and the long-term services and supports field.*
- *The makeup of the membership provides the Council with a built-in communications and outreach platform that reaches all corners of the state.*

Background Material

1. Support for a balanced approach that includes strategies to increase revenue; NOT an “all cuts” budget.
 - a. Reliance on the sales tax (the most regressive of all taxes) means that our revenue stream is subject to drastic swings in the economy and the volatility is getting worse. We need revenue streams that are more dependable during good and bad economic times. We need a tax system that is fair for working families and small businesses.
 - b. Constitutional restrictions, federal mandates, and litigation make it very difficult to find additional cuts. The impact of additional cuts on our economic recovery and public structures from health care to education would be devastating.
 - c. Do not pit seniors against children.
 - d. Start by eliminating the out of state sales tax exemption; add a capital gains tax, and sunset every tax exemption.
2. Support for Affordable Care Act initiatives that are cost efficient.
 - a. Expand coverage to the 350,000 in Washington State who are uninsured. Of these, 167,000 are age 50 to 64. They are no longer attached to an employer based health plan.
 - b. Over 40,000 Washingtonians age 50-64 will be eligible for Medicaid Expansion. The federal government will cover 100% of this cost through 2016 and 90% thereafter.
 - c. Over 90,000 Washingtonians age 50-64 will be eligible for subsidies through the Healthplanfinder.
 - d. Retain Medicaid as an entitlement program which allows for enrollment increases during economic downturns and do not convert to block grants.
 - e. Continue to means-test program applicants.
 - f. Provide for access to comprehensive health care including primary, specialty and acute care, prescription drugs, mental health, substance abuse, and prenatal care.
3. Protect the most vulnerable seniors and adults with disabilities. Prioritize funding to protect those receiving services.
 - a. Promote the economic security of older adults. Almost 9% of older adults lived below the poverty level in 2010. An older adult may live above the federal poverty level but still experience economic insecurity. In Washington State the Elder Economic Security Standard Index for 2011 was:

Put latest chart here from Kathy Knight.
 - b. Protect the Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman program’s ability to advocate on behalf of older adults and adults with disabilities who live assisted living facilities, and adult family homes. These individuals visit the facilities, educate residents, families and staff about resident rights and investigate, and resolve complaints on behalf of the residents.
 - c. Fund Adult Protective Services and other programs that protect older individuals from harm, whether physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment, financial exploitation or self-neglect.
 - i. Old individuals face a higher risk of becoming a victim of older abuse if they have dementia, are socially isolated, are in poor physical health, or if the perpetrator and/or the victim has mental health or substance abuse issues.
 - d. Guarantee reasonable access to mental health services to all seniors.
 - i. Early identification and treatment of mental health problems helps individuals maintain independence and avoid severe illnesses which require expensive institutionalized care.
 - ii. An estimated 20% of people age 55 and older experience some type of mental health concern with the most common being anxiety, severe cognitive impairment and mood disorders such as depression or bipolar disorder.

- e. Ensure guardianship services and appropriate alternatives are available for people who are incapacitated and ensure mechanisms are in place to protect the rights of consumers across all long term service and support settings.
4. Protect funding that helps seniors remain in their home or a community-based setting.
 - a. Fully fund the Senior Citizens Services Act (SCSA). In 1977 the Washington State Legislature passed this act to establish community-based services that help seniors stay home for their long term care. Currently funded at \$8.4 million dollars per year, SCSA helps over 323,000 older adults annually by funding transportation, personal care services, home-delivered meals and other vital services.
 - b. Although the 60+ population continues to grow, the per capita amount of SCSA funds has been decreasing since 1998.
 - c. Support unpaid family caregivers to reduce the mental, physical and emotional stress and exhaustion from their efforts to keep seniors in their homes that than placed in state-funded facilities. These efforts greatly reduce costs.
 - d. Expand Aging and Disability Resource Centers to better assist individuals and families to prepare for future needs for long term services and supports.
 5. Protect Washington's investment in home and community services.
 - a. Washington's successful long term care system ranks 2d in the nation. We lead the country in choice of settings and providers and in supporting family caregivers.
 - b. Our system is both popular and cost effective. Washington ranks 30th in per capita spending on long term care.
 - c. Washington states' nursing home caseload has dramatically declined from more than 17,000 in 1992 to less than 11,000 today, despite a huge increase in the 85+ population.
 - d. Washington services 2.3 times more consumers per dollar in home and community based settings, as compared to nursing home settings.
 - e. Our successful move away from expensive nursing home care has saved an estimated \$3.34 billion from 1996 to present day.
 6. Plan for the future.
 - a. Every day almost 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65. By 2030, Washington State's elderly population is forecast to reach 1,675,800 persons or one-fifth of the state's total population.
 - b. Maximize transportation resources available to older adults and disabled through greater collaboration among transit, planning agencies, the aging network and disability organizations.
 - i. The average older man will outlive his ability to drive a car by 6 years while the average older woman will outlive her ability to drive by 11 years.
 - ii. Advocate for paratransit services that are easily utilized, comprehensive, reliable, and with a simplified application process.
 - iii. Work to restore Sunday and holiday service and to reinstate canceled bus routes that affect riders of all ages.
 - iv. Provide travel training to older adults and adults with disabilities who want to learn how to use the public transportation system.
 - c. Expand options for safe, accessible, and affordable housing for older adults and adults with disabilities.
 - i. Protect and preserve existing subsidized senior housing.
 - ii. Preserve mobile home communities.
 - iii. Adopt policies and create incentives to encourage sustainable, universal design features in new construction and remodeling projects.
 - d. Maintain the integrity of state pension plans, encourage savings for retirement through incentives for small business voluntary retirement accounts, support job creation and stop age discrimination for older workers.