



WASHINGTON UPDATE

MARCH 2015

White House Conference on Aging

The White House Conference on Aging launched a series of regional forums in Tampa, FL on February 19 to address issues affecting older Americans and to allow seniors, caregivers and others to provide input and ideas for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging, to be held in Washington, DC later this year. The regional forums are co-sponsored with AARP and co-planned with the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations. Upcoming forums are planned in Phoenix, AZ (March 31), Seattle, WA (April 2), Cleveland, OH (April 27) and Boston, MA (May 28).

The Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging will host a day-long symposium on April 14 in anticipation of the Cleveland forum. The symposium will enable invited leaders in the fields of aging and human services to examine the issues - elder justice, health & wellness, long-term care systems, and income security. Through this process, we intend to develop recommendations for national policy to send to the WHCOA, informed by our local and state experiences.

More information coming soon.

Congressional Update

Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act is still pending for action by the full Senate. Debates over funding for the Department of Homeland Security have dominated the Senate floor schedule. Whether the bill will contain amendments is still undecided. To view the full bill go to: senate.gov and search for Bill S. 192.

FY 2016 Appropriations

On Thursday, February 26, a hearing on aging and disability funding was held by the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK). Among the witnesses were Kathy Greenlee, Administrator of the Administration for Community Living and Assistant Secretary on Aging. During the hearing, Greenlee discussed the President's budget proposal and offered justification for the FY 2016 Administration for Community Living budget increases.

Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Congressional Caucus Launched

On March 3, a new bipartisan, bicameral caucus called the Assisting Caregivers Today Caucus, or ACT Caucus, launched. It is being co-chaired by Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Reps. Diane Black (R-TN) and Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM). The caucus's goal is to inform members of Congress about the need to support caregivers and the challenges individuals face as they seek to live independently. The caucus would also like to "elevate the conversation, forge an environment and context conducive to reaching bipartisan solutions, and help create a sense of urgency to act" on these issues, according to its description. At the launch event, the co-chairs spoke about their interest in the issue and family caregivers shared their personal stories.

HHS Reports that the Affordable Care Act Has Saved Billions of Dollars for Seniors

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reports that since the 2010 enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a total of 9.4 million seniors and people with disabilities have saved more than \$15 billion on prescription drugs, on average \$1,598 per beneficiary. In 2014, these savings hit record highs, as 5.1 million seniors and people with disabilities saved \$4.8 billion, an average of \$941 per beneficiary. In 2013, the average amount saved per beneficiary was only \$907.

The ACA closes Medicare's gap in prescription drug coverage known as the "donut hole," where beneficiaries had to pay the full cost of their prescriptions out of pocket, before catastrophic coverage took effect. The hole will be completely closed by 2020. Because of the ACA, Medicare Part D beneficiaries who fell into the donut hole began receiving discounts on covered brand-name and generic drugs. In 2015, these beneficiaries will receive discounts of 55% on the cost of brand-name drugs and 35% on the cost of generic drugs.

"Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, seniors and people with disabilities have saved over \$15 billion on prescription drugs, and these savings will only increase over time as we close the Medicare coverage gap known as the donut hole," said HHS Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell. "By providing access to affordable prescription drugs ... the Affordable Care Act is working for seniors to help keep them healthier."

Contact Us

We welcome your feedback!
Please share questions,
suggestions or concerns.

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Census Bureau Finds SNAP Aid Rates Have Doubled Since 2000

The Washington Post reported last week that a new Census Bureau report found that the share of households receiving aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has more than doubled since 2000. It has grown from 6.2% to 13.5% nationally and is now helping more than 1 in 8 Americans.

In 2000, almost half the states had SNAP usage rates below 2013's minimum of 5.9%, with 15 states having rates below 5%. Today, 40 states have SNAP usage rates above 10%, whereas in 2000, only three states did. The percent of households on SNAP has climbed to highs of 19.8% in Oregon and 19.4% in Mississippi.

To view the full report visit: census.gov and search for SNAP Receipt.