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2015 White House Conference on Aging planning begins

Discussions began yesterday at the White House around plans for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA). These decennial events are held to engage with stakeholders and individuals interested in aging about issues and areas important to older individuals and people in the aging field.

A 2015 White House Conference on Aging will coincide with the 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act, as well as the 80th anniversary of Social Security. The event would be an opportunity to look ahead to the issues that will help shape the landscape for older Americans for the next decade. Issues that could be addressed at the event include:

Retirement security: Financial security in retirement provides essential peace of mind for older Americans, but requires attention during our working lives to ensure that we are well prepared for retirement.

Long-term services and supports: Older Americans overwhelmingly prefer to remain independent in the community as they age. They need supports to do so, including a caregiving network and well-supported workforce.

Healthy aging: As medical advances progress, the opportunities for older Americans to maintain their health and vitality should progress as well.

The Elder Justice Act was enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act, and we need to realize its vision of protecting seniors from scam artists and others seeking to take advantage of them.

No date or details have yet been determined for the 2015 WHCoA. The previous WHCoA was held in December 2005. The White House will launch WhiteHouseConferenceOnAging.gov later this summer as the official conference site.

White House officials intend to use new technology, agencies' regional offices, partners, and other strategies to engage directly with older Americans and stakeholders on these issues.

Excerpted from The White House Blog, July 29, 2014. *2015 White House Conference on Aging planning begins.* www.whitehouse.gov.



AGEWATCH is an occasional publication of the California Commission on Aging (CCoA) intended to inform, educate, and advocate. The CCoA is an independent state agency established in 1973 to serve as the principal state advocate on behalf of older Californians. The CCoA office is located at 1300 National Drive, Suite 173, Sacramento, CA 95834.

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Why Not the Older Americans Act?

Guest Editorial

By Robert Blancato



Robert Blancato

The American public's cynicism about Washington can diminish when bipartisanship prevails and bills become law. The most recent example of this was the signing into law of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act by President Obama yesterday, July 22. There are earlier examples including the reauthorizations of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Farm Bill. As is the case with most legislation, none of these bills were perfect, but they contained sufficient bipartisan support to make it across the finish line.

So why is the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act not in this group? The law's name may not be recognizable for some, but many of the services the law provides and funds are widely recognized, such as Meals on Wheels, senior centers, elder abuse prevention and low-income community service employment.

This month the Older Americans Act (OAA) celebrates its 49th anniversary of becoming law. That makes it a longer-standing program than either the Workforce Act or VAWA. Over its history, the OAA has been one of the most effective programs ever enacted. It is a program which operates in every Congressional district. It saves Medicaid and Medicare considerable amounts of money through its services which allow older adults to remain in the community or at home, choices which are also preferred by older adults. It is a job creator and job retainer program in communities.

The law is now almost four years late in being renewed. There is no logical reason for this. The Senate has moved the process to the point where an excellent bill, S. 1562, has been voted out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and awaits full Senate action. The House has two pending bills but no sign of any action.

The upcoming August recess is a special opportunity for grassroots advocates to communicate directly with their representatives in Congress. The message can be simple: renew the Older Americans Act because it is important to seniors in our community; the Act has more than proven its value and will continue to as our population ages.

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Medicare beneficiaries' savings under ACA revealed

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The Department of Health and Human Services announced today that more than 8.2 million seniors and people with disabilities with Medicare have saved \$11.5 billion since 2010 due to changes made through the Affordable Care Act.

The news follows the recent release of the Medicare Trustees report, which indicates the life of the Medicare Trust Fund has been extended to 2030, up from its projection of 2017 in 2009, and Part B premiums are expected to stay the same for the second year in a row. Additionally, a new HHS report found that per capita, Medicare spending growth has averaged 2 percent over 2009 - 2012, and nearly 0 percent in 2013, one-third of the growth rate over the 2000-2008 period.

The Affordable Care Act makes Medicare prescription drug coverage more affordable by gradually closing the coverage gap, known as the donut hole, where beneficiaries had to pay the full cost of their prescriptions out of pocket before catastrophic coverage took effect.

According to HHS, more than 8.2 million seniors and people with disabilities with Medicare have saved over \$11.5 billion on prescription drugs since 2010 as a result of discounts in the donut hole and rebates in 2010, for an average of \$1,407.

In California, 139,965 Medicare beneficiaries have received a total \$951.9 million in discounts on prescription drugs as a result of the gradual closure of the coverage gap, including about \$123.6 million in 2014.

The average discount per beneficiary in the state was \$883 in 2014 ([CMS report](#), July 2014). To read the announcement, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/news>. For state-by-state information on discounts on the donut hole, please visit: <http://downloads.cms.gov/files/Medicare-Part-D-Donut-Hole-Savings-Summary-2010-June-2014.pdf>.

Excerpts from HHS Press Release, *Over 8.2 million seniors have saved more than \$11.5 billion on prescription drugs since 2010*, July 29, 2014.

AGEWATCH

July 30, 2014

Upcoming Events

August 12, Senate Select Committee on Aging, 2:00 p.m., Room 113, State Capitol, Sacramento. Information at <http://senate.ca.gov/agingandlongtermcare>.

August 12 - 13, Triple-A Council of California, Vagabond Inn, Sacramento. www.4TACC.org.

September 29-30, California Commission on Aging, Hyatt Regency Sacramento. www.ccoa.ca.gov.

September 30, The SCAN Foundation's 2014 Annual Long-Term Services and Supports Summit, Sacramento Convention Center - Information at: <http://www.thescanfoundation.org/register-now-september-30-2014-scan-foundations-2014-california-ltss-summit#sthash.q9DaxR7n.dpuf>

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