



RSVP of Dane County

...where volunteers make a difference

Dependability - Partnership - Service - Volunteerism - Innovation

ISSUE BRIEF

BACKGROUND

President Obama's fiscal year 2015 budget proposal to Congress includes recommendations to re-structure and redistribute resources for the Senior Corps service programs (RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companions) under the Corporation for National and Community Service.

What is RSVP?

RSVP is a personal placement volunteer agency serving adults age 55 and over. For more than 40 years, RSVP has been matching volunteers with community service opportunities.

RSVP volunteers share their knowledge, interests, experience and energy, contributing to the well-being of their local communities. Volunteerism is an important way that older adults can stay healthier, both physically and mentally, by being active, involved, contributing members of their communities. With the growing numbers of older adults and the tremendous cost of health care, it is essential that seniors remain active, and that their service is considered a resource to assist with community needs.

The PROBLEM

This budget proposal, which includes a 69% reduction in funding for RSVP, will shut down over two thirds of RSVPs (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) nationwide, dropping approximately 200,000 senior volunteers and impacting those they serve. If this budget provision is passed, the impact on older adults and those they serve will be devastating.

It is impossible to calculate the total impact of this loss of service for communities. In Dane County, nearly 1,800 RSVP volunteers give more than 180,000 hours of their time annually by:

- tutoring children in over 200 classrooms;
- providing 8,000 rides and delivering over 70,000 meals for seniors and veterans;
- making 8,000 handmade items (mittens, hats, scarves, etc.) for children and families;
- educating more than 700 older adults on crime prevention and safety through Triad;
- helping 80 nonprofit/public agencies extend their services.

In Wisconsin, over 8,000 volunteers in 17 programs serve 1 million hours each year. Nationwide, it is estimated that 82,590 fewer students will receive tutoring and mentoring services, and as many as 563,200 veterans and 742,800 frail seniors and Americans with disabilities will lose essential support. The impact on the Foster Grandparent (FGP) and Senior Companion (SCP) programs will also be significant. Under the new proposal, which includes a 14% reduction in funding for FGP, an FGP volunteer could fulfill the reduced requirement of 450 hours in 10 weeks, which will diminish the on-going tutoring/mentoring benefit for thousands of children nationwide. A 16% cut to SCP means a loss of nearly 2 million hours of service helping disabled individuals and seniors maintain independent living.

The SOLUTION

Congressman Peter DeFazio, District 4, State of Oregon, has written a letter opposing the changes to Senior Corps in the 2015 budget. "We ask that you maintain current funding levels for Senior Corps in FY 2015. We also ask that you maintain the current structure of this important program." Congressional representatives can sign on to the DeFazio letter by contacting Michael Hayes of DeFazio's office: michael.hayes@mail.house.gov.

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