

To: The Honorable Mark Pocan
Congress Representative, State of Wisconsin
10 East Doty Street, Suite 405
Madison WI 53703

Re: President Obama's Budget Proposal for Older Americans Act

From: Paul H. Kusuda; 200 Tompkins Dr.; Madison WI 53716

Date: April 9, 2014

President Obama and his advisors who helped formulate his 2015 Budget Proposal for the Older Americans Act (OAA) may need to be reminded of the admonition: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." There is no need to restructure and redistribute resources for Senior Corps service programs (RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companions) under the Corporation for National and Community Services.

The proposed 69 percent funding slash for RSVP will result in closure of more than two-thirds of RSVP programs, dropping about 200,000 senior and other volunteers. That will negatively affect not only those receiving services vital to their maintenance of health, welfare, and pursuit of happiness but also those providing such services. Central to the concept of receiving and providing the variety of services through RSVP programs is the often-ignored serendipitous accompaniment for both sides of the element of socialization—a vital component of mental and emotional well-being.

In Dane County alone, nearly 1,800 volunteers are involved in tutoring children; providing rides to seniors and non-senior veterans for medical, dental, and other vitally-needed appointments; making hand-made items such as mittens, infant skull-caps, and scarves; providing educational programs for the elderly with special attention to crime prevention and safety; conducting intergenerational programs; and helping other non-profit and public agencies extend their services. Other RSVP programs in our state provide similar services. Although Wisconsin is rich with volunteers, without RSVP, the number will diminish drastically to the detriment of its citizenry.

With the elderly population increasing daily, with the number of frail elderly burgeoning, and with life spans exceeding longevity estimates, rational planning for the future of our nation should impel our leaders toward increasing appropriations for all OAA elements.

I ask that you review carefully the President's OAA budget proposal not only as to appropriations but also as to restructuring. I also ask that you consider increasing appropriations for all OAA Titles.

Thank you for your continuing concern and help on behalf of the elderly, not only in Wisconsin but throughout the United States. I recognize the dilemma of balancing income and expenditures; however, I believe that restructuring the tax system and meeting common human needs are goals that can and must be met, not in future years but now.