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# Aging Alert

Vol. 34, No. 6

August 2009

## HOUSE REPUBLICANS PROPOSE DRASTIC CUTS FOR SENIORS

Republicans in the Michigan House of Representatives are recommending a \$24 million cut to aging programs funded by the Office of Services to the Aging (OSA). The recommendation is found in a plan to balance the budget without resorting to tax hikes - [www.gophouse.com/plan](http://www.gophouse.com/plan). Republicans say Michigan needs to address its structural deficit by “eliminating government waste, re-evaluating spending priorities and reinvesting where necessary.”

The cut would wipe out 90% of state funding for home and community-based services and senior meals. While these services also receive federal funding, thousands of older Michiganders would be cut off from programs if the House Republican cuts are implemented. State cuts would also result in the loss of federal funds and other funding. Since Republicans are in the minority in the House, their suggestions are just that, for the moment. But there are indications they are gaining traction. Senator Ron Jelinek (R-Three Oaks), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, is now signaling his support for the OSA cuts, even while admitting they are “unfortunate” and would force many older adults to move into nursing homes on the Medicaid program.

**“I can’t believe legislators want to make seniors go hungry and deny relief to overworked caregivers,” says Marion Owen, President of the Area Agencies on Aging Association.**

Here are specifics on the impact:

- 2,380 seniors at risk of nursing home placement would lose care management services
- 6,800 seniors would lose personal care and other in-home services
- Over 48,000 phone calls for information and assistance would go unanswered
- Over 2.2 million meals would be eliminated for 14,424 homebound elders
- 69,000 meals would be cut for 1,500 older adults at senior centers and other mealsites

“I can’t believe legislators want to make seniors go hungry and deny relief to overworked caregivers!” says Marion Owen, President of the Area Agencies on Aging Association. “Besides the human suffering, these OSA cuts will increase spending for Medicaid nursing home care –

they don't make any sense!"

The House Republican report also recommends consolidating services provided by community mental health, public health, substance abuse and area agencies on aging for a savings of \$2 million. While cuts are proposed for most departments in state government, the largest cuts are aimed at Community Health (\$362 million), Human Services (\$172 million), and Higher Education (\$167 million).

The report also recommends:

- Privatizing local Department of Human Service offices using local organizations;
- Freezing enrollment in the Earned Income Tax Credit which benefits workers providing long term care;
- Reducing mental health services for people not on Medicaid, and substance abuse services saving \$150 million;
- Increasing Medicaid co-pays; and
- Cutting Department of Human Services' emergency funds by 10%.

The 2010 budget is still being negotiated by Governor Granholm and House and Senate leaders, with only a month to go before the fiscal year begins. State government operations will have to be shut down if decisions aren't finalized by September 30.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Facts about Diabetes

- Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., costing \$116 billion for medical care.
- Of the 18 million Americans diagnosed with diabetes, only slightly more than half had their blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure under control in 2006, the latest data available. About 55% of adults with diabetes had their blood sugar and total cholesterol levels under control, and about 59% had their blood pressure under control. Failure to manage diabetes can lead to kidney disease, skin, foot and eye problems, heart attacks and strokes.
- In 2006, 43% of African Americans and 38% of Mexican Americans with diabetes had blood sugar levels under control, compared with 61% of white Americans.
- There has been significant progress in blood pressure control by minority diabetics. From 2002 to 2006, the percentage of diabetics with their blood pressure under control improved from 39% to 58% for African Americans, and from 49% to 67% for Mexican Americans. By 2006, there were no significant differences among diabetic African Americans, Mexican Americans and white Americans on blood pressure control.
- Up to 6 million Americans may have diabetes but don't know it. Symptoms can include increased thirst or appetite, frequent urination, weight loss or fatigue. More information can be found at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) or by calling 1-800-diabetes.

Taken from "Research Activities," a publication of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, July 2009.

## HOUSE BILLS OF INTEREST TO SENIORS

**HB 4035 PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION** (Jackson) Standardizes eligibility requirements and procedures used by local governments for granting hardship exemptions from local property taxes. Requires local governments to advertise the availability of hardship exemptions and allows taxpayers to receive an exemption for the previous two years. In House Urban Policy Committee.

**HB 4505 DISPOSITION OF REMAINS** (Byrnes) Allows a person to designate a specific individual with the power to make decisions about funeral arrangements and the disposition of his/her body, including cremation. In House Judiciary Committee.

**HB 4508 PRESCRIPTION DRUGS** (Caul) Permits pharmacists to place prescription drugs in customized packaging regardless of whether the pharmacist filled the script in the first place. Certain requirements must be met. In House Health Policy Committee.

**HB 4529 EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION** (Gregory) Forbids employers from making employment decisions based on the physical characteristics or the fitness of the individual. Does not apply when physical characteristics are necessary for job performance. In House Labor Committee. Similar to HB 4530, introduced by Rep. Fred Miller.

**HB 4563 HUNTING LICENSE** (Hansen) Allows disabled veterans and prisoners of war to obtain a hunting license, state park permit or camping permit at no charge. In House Tourism, Outdoor Recreation & Natural Resources Committee.

**HB 4581 HOMESTEAD TAX CREDIT** (Barnett) Increases the maximum homestead tax credit from the current \$1,200 to \$1,300 for 2009, and increases the amount for inflation in 2010 and beyond. In House Tax Policy Committee.

**HB 4585-93 HIGH-COST HOME LOANS** (Melton, Angerer, Switalski, Leland, Valentine, Young, Ebli, Simpson & Corriveau) Imposes various limitations and conditions on the sale of high-cost home loans to protect consumers from predatory lenders. In House Banking & Financial Services Committee.

**HB 4597-4600 MENTAL HEALTH PARITY** (Warren, Pearce, Johnson, Byrnes) Forbids health insurers from imposing more restrictive benefit limitations or extra cost-sharing requirements on mental health treatment compared with medical treatment. Would affect inpatient and outpatient treatment for individual and group health insurance policies beginning January 1, 2010. In House Health Policy Committee.

**HB 4615 SURGERY** (Liss) Requires hospitals and outpatient facilities to use special "circulating nurses" to monitor safety in operating rooms. In House Health Policy Committee.

**HB 4617 ABUSE, NEGLECT & EXPLOITATION** (Womack) Prevents individuals convicted of abusing, neglecting or exploiting another person from inheriting his or her property. Does not apply if the victim expressed specific intent after the abuse allowing the felon to inherit his or her property. In House Senior Health, Security & Retirement Committee.

**HB 4618 EXPLOITATION** (Huckleberry) Increases the financial penalties already in

state law for exploiting a vulnerable adult. Tie-barred to companion bill - HB 4727. Both bills reported from committee, on House floor for a vote.

**HB 4619 GUARDIANSHIP** (Segal) Requires a guardian ad litem to assess the amount of cash and property readily convertible into cash in a ward's estate to determine if the estate requires special protection. In House Senior Health, Security & Retirement Committee.

**HB 4643 ADULT FOSTER CARE** (Johnson) Limits the number of foster care homes in a municipality to no more than 1 home per 800 residents. In House Regulatory Reform Committee.

**HB 4649 UTILITY SHUT-OFF** (Horn) Part of a package to better inform customers about shut-offs and programs available, prevent improper shut-offs, and prevent injury and deaths from shut-offs. Includes HBs 4650, 4655-4662 and 4673. Sponsors are Representatives Spade, Schmidt, Mayes, Stamas, Neumann, Sheltroun, Schuitmaker, Coulouris, and Melton. Passed House, in Senate Energy Policy & Public Utilities Committee.

## SENATE BILLS OF INTEREST TO SENIORS

**SB 282 PROPERTY TAXES** (Sanborn) Allows homeowners to keep the exemption from paying school taxes on their home if they are living in a senior apartment, adult foster care home, home for the aged, nursing home or in assisted living. The home cannot be occupied or rented. Passed Senate in May, in House Tax Policy Committee.

**SB 314 IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE DRUGS** (Gleason) Forbids pharmacists from switching an immunosuppressive drug prescribed to prevent the rejection of a transplanted organ, without the consent of the physician and patient. In Senate Health Policy Committee.

**SB 318 ANTI-EPILEPTIC DRUGS** (Gleason) Forbids pharmacists from switching an antiepileptic drug prescribed to prevent seizures without the consent of the physician and patient. In Senate Health Policy Committee.

**SB 320 UTILITY SHUT-OFF** (Jacobs) Part of a package to better inform customers about shut-offs and programs available, prevent improper shut-offs, and prevent injury and deaths from shut-offs. Other bills are SB 327-331, and 337-339, sponsored by Senators Whitmer, Barcia, Olshove, Clark-Coleman, Patterson, Birkholz, Jansen, and Gilbert. In Senate Energy Policy & Public Utilities Committee.

**SB 335 HOMESTEAD TAX CREDIT** (Hunter) Increases the maximum credit from \$1,200 to \$1,400 for households with incomes of \$50,000 or less. In Senate Finance Committee.

**SB 367 ASSISTED LIVING** (Olshove) Defines assisted living as a licensed adult foster care home or home for the aged. Tie-barred to SB 282. In Senate Finance Committee.

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