

**Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl  
Special Committee on Aging Hearing  
The Older Americans Act:  
Making Reauthorization Work for Wisconsin's Seniors  
September 7, 2010**

Hello, everyone. I'd like to thank you for joining us here today. It's so nice to be holding an Aging Committee hearing here in my hometown.

In 1965, President Johnson signed into law the Older American's Act which provides the bulk of aging-related programs. Today, it serves over 10 million Americans nationwide, and over 386,000 seniors right here in Wisconsin. The Older Americans Act helps seniors live independently in their communities through home care, home-delivered and group meals, family caregiver support, transportation and other services. Last year, federal funding for OAA programs was \$2.3 billion.

Every five years, Congress takes a fresh look at OAA programs to assess whether they are meeting the needs of the people they serve. We are here today to listen to your ideas for strengthening and improving OAA programs. As Chair of the Senate Aging Committee, I will work closely with my colleagues to ensure your recommendations play a prominent role in the debate over the future of these programs.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have been a strong supporter for adequate funding for OAA programs each year. I have long-championed the National Family Caregiver Support Program, which provides needed assistance and respite services to family members who care for an elderly or disabled relative. I am also a longtime supporter of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which provides an advocate for elderly and disabled patients to help resolve complaints of abuse and neglect in long-term care.

Not surprisingly, the need for such vital OAA programs has increased during these difficult economic times. Over the next year, we will be looking to find the areas in which OAA programs are not meeting the needs of today's seniors so we can fill in those gaps during reauthorization.

We are very fortunate to be joined today by U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee. We are particularly proud to host her here in Wisconsin because our state is a model for OAA programs in many ways, as you will hear from our other witnesses.

Thank you again to all of you for being here. I look forward to hearing your input on ways we can improve the Older Americans Act during reauthorization, both for Wisconsin's seniors and seniors nationwide.