

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2012

Barry Rand
Chief Executive Officer, AARP
601 E Street, NW
Washington DC 20049

Dear Mr. Rand,

We write to express the concerns of our constituents regarding recent reports that AARP helped fund and participated in political activities at the behest of the White House during consideration of President Obama's health care law.

As detailed in a report released by the House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier this month, the White House directed AARP efforts during consideration of the law including:

- Jim Messina, White House Deputy Chief of Staff, requesting that you meet with Senator Ben Nelson "personally and just lay it on the line" that (AARP) "...will be with you, we will protect you. But if you kill this bill, seniors will not forget".
- Mr. Messina requesting that AARP pay for "...immediate robo calls into Nebraska urging nelson to vote for cloture..." on the Presidents health care bill.
- Mr. Messina forwarding AARP a "top 25 targets list from house leadership" who were "to get thanked with ads after the vote".
- Democratic operatives requesting money from AARP to fund a White House created 501(c)(4) 'Super Pac' called *Healthy Economy Now* that was created to advertise support for President Obama's health-care bill in various states.

The report also highlights AARP efforts to coordinate advocacy with the White House including:

- A July 23, 2009 email from AARP officials to the White House stating "Our calls against (health care) reform are coming in 14 to 1".
- A July 24, 2009 email sent from AARP officials to White House staff reporting "We are getting 1,400 to 1,600 calls per day with the vast majority in opposition. We are also getting a trickle each day of members resigning, which is likely to grow significantly in the weeks ahead. Please keep this information close."
- Sharing numbers of AARP membership cancellations.
- Developing advertisements urging for passage of the President's health-care bill.
- Developing advertisements thanking specific Members of Congress for their vote on the Presidents bill, as requested by the White House.

These facts suggest a clear conflict of interest on the part of AARP and make us question the justification your organization used to support the President's law, especially in light of numerous public polls conducted before and after passage highlighting senior opposition.

A Gallup poll published on July 31, 2009 – seven days after AARP privately communicated senior opposition to the White House – found that "Seniors are the least likely of all age groups in the U.S. to say that healthcare reform will benefit their personal healthcare situation" by a margin of 3 to 1. A subsequent Gallop poll released on September 24, 2009 found that "those 65 and older are opposed by a 10-point margin." Senior opposition to the bill remained consistent once the bill became law. A Kaiser Family Foundation tracking poll found a majority of seniors still opposed to the law for 11 consecutive months after it was signed into law.

Nothing may summarize senior's thoughts about the law or AARP's actions better than the words of a former member as detailed in the Energy and Commerce Committee report: "When I joined AARP, I did not do so as a 'political organization' and I do not want your views being represented as MY VIEWS. It disturbed me to hear President Obama state in his public address that AARP is behind his 'Health Care Reform Bill.' With the media repeating this, some may take it for granted that if AARP is for it, then it must be good. Please clarify that you do not speak for all members, and refrain from being a political organization that makes telephone calls soliciting support for your decision."

If the Energy and Commerce report is accurate, we believe AARP failed its membership by allowing White House officials to direct your organizations grass-roots and congressional advocacy efforts. Further, we believe that AARP may have misled the American public about seniors' support of the President's legislation, substituting its judgment for that of its members. A report by House Ways and Means Committee members found the law "could result in a windfall for AARP that exceeds over \$1 billion during the next 10 years."

Therefore, we believe you owe seniors answers to the following questions:

1. Did you reach out to Senator Nelson at the request of the White House, either in person or by phone, in order to influence his vote on the President's health care bill?
2. Did AARP orchestrate "robo calls" to influence Senator Nelson's vote for cloture on the President's health care bill, as requested by the White House?
3. Did Democratic operatives solicit money from AARP to fund the White House 501(c)(4) *Healthy Economy Now* 'Super Pac' for the purpose of urging passage of the law and, if so, did AARP contribute money to *Healthy Economy Now*?
4. Did AARP contribute funding to any organization not owned or operated by AARP that advocated for passage of the Democratic Party's health-care law in the 111th Congress?
5. How many of the White House "top 25 targets from house leadership...to (be) thanked with ads" for voting in favor of health care reform did AARP thank with advertisements for their vote on health care reform?
6. Will AARP publicly release the questions and methodology it used to conclude that seniors supported the President's health care law?
7. To what extent did you educate seniors on concerns raised by the Medicare Actuary related to access problems caused by the Medicare cuts in the law?

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,








