

## **Title VII Update, December 1, 2005**

**\*\* High Priority \*\***

Hello, Everyone,

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I wanted to give you an update on the current status and efforts regarding Title VII funding for geriatrics. While we were at GSA, NAGEC did a press release which was sent to over 1500 media outlets nationwide and which I did see in an aging-related publication on the internet. We also held a press conference where Terry Fulmer, Marie Bernard, Pat Blanchette and Harvey Cohen spoke about the impact of elimination of Title VII funding for geriatric education and training. Our thanks go out to them for their support.

You have all received copies of the press release and draft letters for your GECs and consortium partners and the supporting documentation about funding amounts by state. We have been focusing our efforts on the Republicans, especially those in decision-making roles on the Conference Committee and on the Appropriations Committee.

University lobbyists have been working feverishly to get the attention of our legislators and pressure them to reinstate funding for geriatrics. The going is tough, even for the most skilled lobbyists, who are frustrated by the unavailability of some of their key contacts and the intractable position on holding down the budget. Academia and geriatrics will be in peril if funding for geriatric education is lost.

Many of you have been working very hard contacting your legislators by fax, e-mail and by phone. Some of us have done op-ed pieces and are working on local press conferences. I thank you for your efforts. The message has certainly gotten out and our legislators know who we are. However, there are MAJOR concerns at this time that funding for Labor/HHS programs like Title VII has a good likelihood of being rolled into the Defense Appropriation, which legislators feel is less contentious and will probably be more easily approved. Others are saying that Lewis (R-CA), who is the Conference Committee Chair, is pushing for a permanent continuing resolution (CR), which most likely would be at the lower House-recommended level, which again leaves us at \$0 for geriatrics. Either of these alternatives would prove disastrous for GECs and geriatrics, because unless we get some money restored, it will herald a death knell for the GEC network and our geriatric programs. We will not even be a blip on the radar screen when reauthorization comes up.

At this time, we need to push the leadership in the House and Senate to

return to conference to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate budget numbers. If the Labor/HHS appropriation is rolled into the Defense Appropriations bill, geriatrics will get lost. Several key legislative aides have indicated that there would be only a VERY slim chance of getting someone to support the addition of a special earmark for geriatrics if things go the Defense Appropriations route.

Andrea Sherman (CNYGEC), Past President of NAGEC and I have been working on creative strategies to get the word out and focus on geriatrics, including an op-ed piece developed by Dr. Robert Butler and Dr. Gene Cohen. The White House Conference on Aging will be convened next week in Washington, DC. We are looking at the potential for media coverage, a press conference, and getting the support of the legions of seniors who will be converging on Washington.

Timing is critical. The Senate will not return to DC until December 12. The current CR runs out on December 17th. By that time, something will most probably be determined - either a permant CR or an appropriation. If you are in key states like New York (Walsh-R), California (Lewis-R and Cunningham-R), Texas (Granger-R), Ohio (Regula-R), Oklahoma (Istook-R), Kentucky (Wicker-R- and Northup-R), Florida (Weldon-R) and Pennsylvania (Peterson-R), please contact these Republicans ASAP and emphasize the importance of restoring funding for geriatrics.

Do not forget the rest of your legislators--Democrats and Republicans. Even if they are not on the Conference Committee, their vote will be critical. It is imperative that you ask to speak with the Legislative Aide for Health. Do not be content to leave a message or only fax a letter. At this juncture, TALKING to the LA is critical. You can follow up with a letter or an e-mail. Our program is small by comparison with others. Ask them to support the Senate amount of \$29.5 for geriatrics. Mention the White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA). Many legislators will be stopping by, since there will be many opportunities for media coverage. They will also have an opportunity to interact with representatives from the aging services network, leaders in geriatrics, and, most important, thousands of senior citizens who are their constituents and who value and deserve to have their health care provided by professionals who have been trained in care of the elderly.

I will keep you posted on our activities and latest legislative strategies as they unfold. Right now Andrea and I are working to get some press coverage for Title VII funding for geriatrics in the Washington Post and at the WHCoA and even try to stage a media-worthy event.

Please keep up the fight! We need to pressure our legislators not to fail our nation's elderly. Funding for geriatric education and training must be preserved. We cannot stay ahead of the age wave of boomers and maintain the quality of life our older Americans deserve if Federal support for education and training in geriatrics is withdrawn.

Thank you for your help. We must remain united and tireless in our efforts!

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