

# ILC Policy Report

*Longevity News and Trends in the U.S. and abroad*

April 2007



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ILC Policy Report prepared by  
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## Effort to Sustain Funding For Geriatrics Education Continues

The federal government has begun the process of distributing the funding for the geriatrics education and training programs that was restored earlier this year in the Fiscal 2007 appropriations legislation. The funding supports the three components of the geriatrics health professions program: the Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACAs), Geriatric Training for Physicians, Dentists, and Behavioral and Mental Health Professionals, and the nation's network of Geriatric Education Centers (GECs). The very existence of these initiatives was threatened when Congress eliminated funding for Fiscal 2006. However, a

strong advocacy effort to highlight the importance of geriatrics education and training resulted in a major victory earlier this year, when Congress voted to restore funding to the previous level of \$31.5 million. Now Congress is set to begin work on the appropriations bills for Fiscal 2008 and the ILC and its colleagues will renew their efforts to ensure that the federal government continues to invest in geriatrics education and training for the nation's health care workforce. A sustained effort to ensure that all health care providers have some knowledge of geriatric medicine is critical to providing quality and effective health care to a rapidly growing older population.

## News from the U.S. Government

### **Administration on Aging (AOA):**

The AOA has published its latest "Profile of Older Americans 2006," which presents a wide range of data on the older population, including its size, future growth, racial and ethnic composition, living arrangements, employment, education, and more. It indicates that there were 36.8 million people aged 65 and over in 2005, representing 12.4 percent of the population. Of this, 18.5

percent were minorities. The median income of older persons was \$21,785 for men and \$12,495 for women. Major sources of income were Social Security, income from assets, private pensions, government employee pensions, and earnings. The report also includes a special focus on Health Literacy, and finds that older adults have disproportionately lower health literacy than younger adults. This is especially

## News from the U.S. Government (cont'd)

problematic as older people have more health issues, doctor visits, and hospital admissions than the younger population. The report is at [www.aoa.gov/press/did\\_you\\_know/2007/march/2006profile.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/press/did_you_know/2007/march/2006profile.pdf).

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics has issued a report "Trends in Health Status and Health Care Use Among Older Women," which discusses how older women face different challenges in maintaining their health than older men. According to the report, older women develop different chronic conditions, with higher rates of hypertension, arthritis, and asthma than men, and are more likely to need assistance with personal care and routine care needs. In addition, osteoporosis is a significant threat to older women. As a result, the report notes that the financing and provision of health care and long term care is a particularly important issue for older women. The report is at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ahcd/agingtrends/07olderwomen.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ahcd/agingtrends/07olderwomen.pdf).

**Government Accountability Office (GAO):** The GAO has issued the following reports and testimonies: "Drug Safety: FDA Needs to Further Address Shortcomings in Its Postmarket Decision-making Process"; "Medicare: Thousands of Medicare Part B Providers Abuse the Federal Tax System"; "Medicare Spending: Preliminary Findings Regarding an Approach Focusing on Physician Practice Patterns to Foster Program Efficiency"; "Social Security Reform: Greater Trans-

parency Needed about Potential General Revenue Financing"; "Private Pensions: Increased Reliance on 401(k) Plans Calls for Better Information on Fees." These are at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).

**Hearings:** The Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing on "Preserving "SeniorCare": Affordable Drug Coverage That Works for Wisconsin," on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Hearing information is at [http://aging.senate.gov/hearing\\_detail.cfm?id=271448](http://aging.senate.gov/hearing_detail.cfm?id=271448). The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations held a hearing on "Medicare Doctors Who Cheat On Their Taxes And What Should Be Done About It," on March 20<sup>th</sup>. More information is at <http://hsgac.senate.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Hearings.Home>. The Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support held a hearing on "Assistance for Elderly and Disabled Refugees," on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. More information is at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=545>. The House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on Medicare Advantage on March 21<sup>st</sup>. Hearing information is at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=543>. The House Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing "Are Hidden 401(k) Fees Undermining Retirement Security?" on March 6<sup>th</sup>. Hearing information is at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/fc030607.shtml>.

## International News

**Australia:** The Australian government has released its second Intergenerational Report, which reviews Australia's fiscal outlook over the long term in light of its aging population and other factors. It finds that the nation's fiscal sustainability has improved since 2002, although the aging of the population is projected to slow economic growth to perhaps 1.6% per year over the

next 40 years compared with 2.1% over the past 40 years and that spending pressures in areas such as health and pensions are projected to rise. The report emphasizes that steps to manage the fiscal pressures will be necessary, including choices about spending priorities. The report is at [www.treasury.gov.au/contentitem.asp?NavId=035&ContentID=1239](http://www.treasury.gov.au/contentitem.asp?NavId=035&ContentID=1239).

## International News (cont'd)

**Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS):** CSIS has released a new report, “The Aging of Korea: Demographics and Retirement Policy in the Land of the Morning Calm,” which identifies challenges associated with population aging in South Korea and offers solutions for policymakers. The report notes that Korea is still a demographically youthful nation, with older people comprising just 9 percent of the population. However, it has the lowest fertility rate in the world, and the percent of older people is projected to rise dramatically to 38 percent by 2050, making it among the oldest nations in the world. The report outlines a strategy to prepare for this change, including enacting a universal floor of income for older people, adding private pension accounts to its pension system, and strengthening incentives for businesses to convert severance pay benefits into genuine pensions. The report is at [www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/070321\\_gai\\_agingkorea\\_eng.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/070321_gai_agingkorea_eng.pdf).

**Scotland:** The Scottish government has issued a report “All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population,” along with related research findings, which is intended to help respond to and plan for a Scotland with an increasingly aging population. The report outlines several priority areas for strategic action, including recognizing and promoting the contributions that older people can and do make to Scottish society; forging better links between generations; improving the health of Scotland’s people as they age; improving care, support, and protection of older people; meeting housing, transport and related infrastructure needs; and promoting lifelong learning. The report is part of a broader effort to understand and connect the issues of an aging population with all Scots so that the contributions of older people to society is valued, appreciated, and supported. More information is at [www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/03/09092716](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/03/09092716).

**Social Security Administration (SSA):** The U.S. SSA has published its latest “International Update,” which covers recent developments in foreign public and

private pensions in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Poland, Brazil, Fiji, and South Korea. It is at [www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/intl\\_update/2007-03/2007-03.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/intl_update/2007-03/2007-03.html). The SSA also issued a report, “Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific, 2006” which provides a cross-national comparison of the social security systems in 48 countries in Asia and the Pacific. It summarizes the five main social insurance programs in those countries: old-age, disability, and survivors; sickness and maternity; work injury; unemployment; and family allowances. The report is one in a series that focuses on the social security systems of countries in Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The reports are intended to provide important information for researchers and policymakers who are reviewing different ways of approaching social security challenges and adapting the systems to the evolving needs of individuals, households, and families. The report is at [www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/).

**United Kingdom:** The UK’s National Centre for Social Research and the University College of London have released the results of the latest “Health Survey for England 2005: Health of Older People,” which finds that over half of people age 65 and over report their health to be ‘very good’ or ‘good,’ although 71 percent of this age group has some form of chronic illness that limits their activities in some way. The survey also found that nearly two in three adults had high blood pressure, roughly one in four is obese, and over a quarter of women and over a fifth of men have symptoms of depression. The survey includes a wide range of other statistics related to the English population and is intended to help inform national health priorities and policies. More information is at [www.ucl.ac.uk/media/library/healthsurvey](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/media/library/healthsurvey).

**US National Institute on Aging/Department of State:** The NIA and the Department of State have collaborated to produce a report “Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective,” which provides a succinct description of population trends that are

## International News (Cont'd)

transforming the world and presents a snapshot of challenges and opportunities that will stimulate cross-national scientific and policy dialogue. It identifies nine emerging trends, including the growth in the number of older people; rising life expectancy; the growth in the oldest-old; the growing burden of non-communicable diseases; projected overall population declines in many nations; changing family structures resulting in more older people living alone; shifting patterns of work and retirement and the relationship to economic security in old age; evolving social insurance systems; and emerging economic challenges such as financial expenditures, labor supply, and savings and access to capital. The report is at [www.state.gov/g/oes/rls/or/81537.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/oes/rls/or/81537.htm).

**United Nations (UN):** The UN Population Division has published its “World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision,” which confirms that the world population is in the midst of an ‘unprecedented transformation

brought about by the transition from a regime of high mortality and high fertility to one of low mortality and low fertility,’ which essentially triggers the process of population aging. The report finds that there is much diversity in the rate of this demographic transition, with developed countries starting a third stage in which the growth of the proportion of older people exceeds that of younger age groups. Most countries in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are in a second stage, in which the population of working age as a proportion of total population is still growing. In contrast, the report notes that most countries in Africa are still in a first stage of the transition and their populations are still young. According to the report, the population of Europe is the oldest, with a median age of 39 years, followed by North America, with a median age of 36 years. At the national level, Japan has the oldest population in the world, with a median age of almost 43 years. More information can be found at [www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/wpp2006.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/wpp2006.htm).

## Special Interest to the ILC

### **LONGEVITY**

**Life Expectancy:** An article in the March 21<sup>st</sup> issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association explores how the gap in life expectancy between white and black populations has varied considerably during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The study focuses on recent trends and finds that the black-white life expectancy gap increased from 1983 to 1993 to a 7.1 year gap primarily due to slower declines in heart disease among blacks relative to whites and faster increases in homicide and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)–related mortality among young black people. Since then, the gap has decreased to a 5.3 years in 2003 due to relative mortality improvements in homicide, HIV, unintentional injuries, and, among females, heart disease. The paper concludes that further narrowing of the gap will require concerted efforts in public health and health care to address the

major causes of the remaining gap from cardiovascular diseases, homicide, HIV, and infant mortality. It is at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/297.11.1224v1>.

### **CAREGIVING**

**Education and Training:** The ILC’s Caregiving Project for Older Americans has released the results of a new survey finding that most people (78%) who hire in-home caregivers for an older loved one believe that they had received formal training, although this is not necessarily the case. The ILC notes that in-home caregivers need special training to care for the complex issues associated with caring for older adults, but there are no national standards for such training. As a result, current training for in-home caregivers is haphazard. The ILC’s Caregiving Project is working to address this situation by working to develop a national core-curriculum to be used for caregiver education. It recently convened a confer-

## Special Interest to the ILC (cont'd)

ence of experts in caregiving, geriatric medicine, nursing, social work, and health policy to recommend steps towards achieving this goal. The Project has also issued an RFP with the support of the MetLife Foundation, the *Community College Caregiver Training Initiative*, which hopes to encourage the development of new and novel programs to train both family and

professional in-home caregivers, promote skill development, advance the quality of care, and provide opportunities for career development. This initiative will raise awareness of the need for caregiver training and the role of community colleges in addressing this need. More information is at [www.ilcusa.org/prj/caregiving.htm](http://www.ilcusa.org/prj/caregiving.htm).

## News from the Not-for-Profit Sector and Beyond

**Alzheimer's Association:** The Alzheimer's Association has issued its latest report on the prevalence of Alzheimer's Disease, "2007 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures," which highlights that over 5 million people in the United States suffer from Alzheimer's in 2007. It notes that without a cure or effective treatments to delay the onset or progression of the Alzheimer's, 7.7 million people could suffer from the disease by 2030. The report also estimates the direct and indirect costs of Alzheimer's and other dementias, and finds that they amount to more than \$148 billion annually. The report also includes a special section focused on caregiving for people with Alzheimer's, indicating that almost 10 million Americans are caring for someone with Alzheimer's or other dementia. More information is at [www.alz.org/news\\_and\\_events\\_rates\\_rise.asp](http://www.alz.org/news_and_events_rates_rise.asp).

**Boston College Center for Retirement Research:** The Center has issued the following new publications: "Will People Be Healthy Enough to Work Longer?" which discusses how the average retirement age has declined from 66 to 63 over the last 40 years and, given the prevailing belief that people will need to work longer, compares the health status of older people today with those forty years ago. It finds that the health of current older workers appears to be at least as good as it was forty years ago, so there do not appear to be any physical impediments to people working longer. The brief is at [www.bc.edu/centers/crr/ib\\_2007-3.shtml](http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/ib_2007-3.shtml). A related brief, "The Recent Trend Towards Later Retirement," finds that the trend towards earlier retirement seen during the last several decades appears to be reversing, coupled with especially large increases in the labor supply of women in late middle age. The

brief reviews the explanations for this apparent reversal, including the increase in the Social Security normal retirement age, the decline in defined benefit pensions, increase in health care costs, and overall uncertainty about the future economic environment surrounding retirement. The brief is at [www.bc.edu/centers/crr/wob\\_9.shtml](http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/wob_9.shtml).

**Kaiser Family Foundation:** Kaiser has issued updated versions of its two primers, "The Basics of Medicare and Medicaid" which provide an overview of the programs, who they serve, how the programs work and how they are financed. The two programs serve a combined 90 million people, with Medicare financing health care for the older and disabled populations and Medicaid covering health care for the low-income population and serving as the primary payer of long term care. The primers are at [www.kff.org/medicare/med031907pkg.cfm](http://www.kff.org/medicare/med031907pkg.cfm). Kaiser also issued a primer on Medicare Advantage, in which 19% of beneficiaries are enrolled. The primer is at [www.kff.org/medicare/upload/2052-09.pdf](http://www.kff.org/medicare/upload/2052-09.pdf).

**Urban Institute:** The Urban Institute has issued a new brief "Do Annuities Help Older Adults Manage Their Spending?" which notes that many older Americans will likely retire with large amounts of money due to the shift to defined contribution plans, but will have to determine how to carefully manage the assets. The study results suggest that converting retirement wealth into an annuity that guarantees a lifetime income may help retirees manage their spending and ensure they will not outlive their savings. The brief is at [www.urban.org/publications/311431.html](http://www.urban.org/publications/311431.html).

**More newsletters and briefs available on the ILC website!**

Check out the **ILC Update** for news about the ILC, as well as past issues of the **ILC Policy Report** at [www.ilcusa.org/pub/news.htm](http://www.ilcusa.org/pub/news.htm).

Browse the ILC's collection of Issue Briefs on a wide range of topics at [www.ilcusa.org/pub/briefs.htm](http://www.ilcusa.org/pub/briefs.htm) including briefs on:

- The Role of Sleep in Healthy Aging
- A Proactive Approach to Women's Concerns: Women's Longevity Groups and Funds
- The Ageing European Workforce
- Investing in Medical Research: Why We Must Embrace the Audacity of Hope
- Building a Database for Health Policy
- Cost of Illness Studies: Implications for Aging-Related Disorders
- The Future of Ageism

See the wide range of ILC reports and other documents at [www.ilcusa.org/pub/books.htm](http://www.ilcusa.org/pub/books.htm).

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