Earlier this month, **the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee** cleared the federal fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations package for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies. The appropriations package includes a **$34.4 million (8%) cut in the Older Americans Act Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**.

For the past several years, SCSEP was funded at just over $434 million, of which Wisconsin received almost $11 million (program year 2014-15). SCSEP is the oldest (created in 1965) and largest federally-funded program for low-income older adults who seek employment and training assistance, as well as civic engagement. This transitional employment program partners with community-based non-profit organizations and government agencies (host agencies) to provide participants with training opportunities to update their skills. The program:

- Serves over 60,000 seniors annually (Wisconsin SCSEP served 1,721 seniors in program year 2014-15);
- Provides over 40 million community service hours to public and non-profit agencies (Wisconsin SCSEP participants provided 941,889 hours of community service in program year 2014-15);
- Creates opportunities for participants to build skills and self-confidence while earning a modest income (minimum wage) as they work an average of 20 hours; and
- Serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants (over 191 Wisconsin SCSEP participants were placed into permanent employment in program year 2014-15).

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), **funding has not kept pace with the growing numbers or needs of older adults**. Last year, over 67,000 seniors participated in SCSEP, but that represents less than 1% of those who are eligible. According to a recent National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD) report, a survey of participants in long-term service and support programs revealed 20% of seniors and people with disabilities indicated interest in being employed, yet only 2% of the surveyed population reported having employment. The report further indicated **25% of seniors without jobs who enrolled in aging Medicaid programs and 16% of seniors without jobs receiving Older Americans Act services indicated a desire to be employed**.¹

**The House Appropriations Subcommittee has not yet taken action, but is likely to do so very soon.** Concerns have been raised about other funding pressures and priorities expressed by House appropriators. Your involvement is needed to ensure House appropriators reject the cuts proposed by the Senate. **IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: Contact your U.S. Representative** (click on your Representative’s name to link directly to a “contact” button) to educate him/her on the importance of SCSEP funding to older Wisconsinites. Wisconsin does not have any Representatives on the House Appropriations Committee; however, contacts are still important. **Encourage your Representative to reach out to their colleagues on the Appropriations Committee and ask them to reject the Senate’s proposal to cut funding and to keep SCSEP funding intact.**¹


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