

Dear friend:

January 26, 2012

We need your assistance to help seniors who are at risk from budget cuts being proposed by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners.

**Call to Action:** Please join us in preventing cuts to Washoe County Senior Services: *Save our Seniors/Save our Services!*

**Day of Action:** Please join the members of the Reno City Council, Washoe County Senior Services Advisory Board and City of Reno Senior Citizen Advisory Committee in supporting full funding for Washoe County Senior Services.

**When:** Attend the 10:00 AM, Tuesday February 14, 2012 meeting of the Washoe County Commission, for initial discussion about the FY 2012-13 budget.

**Where:** Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Building A, 1001 E. Ninth Street (9<sup>th</sup> and Wells), Reno.

**Why:** Washoe County Senior Services revenue has dropped from \$4.6 million in 2007 to \$3.6 million in 2012; this cut would reduce it by another \$850,000 in 2013. WC Senior Services mission of preventing premature institutionalization by keeping seniors in their own homes would be endangered and at least one critical program will be lost.

As you are aware, Washoe County's senior population is growing more rapidly than any other population segment. And the numbers of seniors who live alone, whose income is below poverty, or are frail, is growing just as fast. Yet the Senior Services Fund "tax override" is the same rate as approved by voters in 1985. Almost 2/3 voted in favor of the Senior Services Fund at that time.

**For example:**

All programs – DayBreak Adult Day Health, Senior Social Services, Congregate and Home Delivered Meals and the Senior Law Project – help the most vulnerable, first.

1. DayBreak Adult Day Health provides families and very frail seniors an alternative to nursing home care.
  - a. The 60 low-income seniors who attend cost an average \$11,000 per year by staying at home with their family. Nevada Medicaid Nursing Home cost for the same senior is about \$69,000 per year;
  - b. This creates an annual savings of \$58,000 per person per year, and total potential savings of \$3.48 million to Nevada taxpayers.
2. Home Delivered Meals provides 1/3 of the USDA Recommended Daily Allowance to homebound seniors, who cannot prepare their own meals.
  - a. The 650 homebound seniors cost an average of \$720, annually; Medicaid placement in a Group Home would cost \$7,300 - \$21,900 annually;
  - b. This creates an approximate savings of \$4.3 million to Nevada taxpayers.
3. The Congregate Meal Program provides a daily meal at 7 Washoe County sites.
  - a. 20% of the 2,100 seniors who attend report that it is their only meal of the day. If cut, 400+ seniors will need help from food banks and shelters.

**Here are ways you and your constituents can help:**

- Share this information with organizations you belong to and ask them to act.
- Write letters to the editor of the RGJ and encourage others to do the same.

- Write, email and phone your County Commissioner. The message is simple. Please, no more cuts to the Washoe County Senior Services Budget!

### **Background**

The Washoe County Board of County Commissioners has provided additional County General Fund support for Senior Services since 1998. In the current year, that amounted to \$230,000. However, that support has been lost.

- This \$230,000 reduction – although it seems small - will have a big impact.
  - The budget cuts will trigger the loss of matching state and federal grants, reducing services further. An additional \$600,000 in grants would be lost.
- WC Senior Services was underfunded before this cut and is unable to reach some of the most vulnerable of our growing senior population.
  - Most of WC Senior Services programs have waiting lists, today.
  - WC Senior Services is available to all County residents, and helped more than 5,100 seniors last year; only 7% of the 75,000 total.
  - The senior population is growing faster than any other segment of the Washoe County community; 25% are now over 55, with the age group 55-64 years absorbing 27.3% of all County population growth over the last decade.

### **One or more of these programs will lost on July 1:**

- Home delivered meals to our most vulnerable elderly – over 650 frail and homebound seniors last year, many who live alone; 110,000+ meals. Their driver checks on their welfare and may be their only contact of the day.
- A nutritious luncheon for over 2,500 seniors per year; 110,000+ meals.
- Critical social services of a visiting nurse, medication management, case management, and in-home care to over 500 seniors.
- DayBreak Adult Day Health, Reno's nursing home alternative that cares for 60 "heavy care" seniors and people with disabilities, allowing their families to keep working. DayBreak assists Medicaid and other low-income seniors who would otherwise be institutionalized because of their heavy personal care needs.
- Senior Law Project attorneys and paralegal staff provide advice counseling and representation to 1,200 seniors.

If these cuts go through, our county and our seniors will be poorer in services than ever before! Your action is critical if we are to protect the services that protect them!

Thank you for your support!

  
Connie McMullen, chairwoman  
Washoe County Senior Services Advisory Board

  
Steve Jacobs, Chairman  
City of Reno Senior Citizen Advisory Committee

County Commission email: <http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/index/rt.html~qid=17>

To find out which district you live in, call Washoe County Registrar of Voters, 328-3670