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Belmont, Ohio, Marshall,
and Wetzel Counties

LuAnn Kennedy, Editor

Wetzel County Commissioners – Hundred Littleton Public Service District

On January 6, 2014, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin announced the award of a \$1,500,000 Small Cities Block Grant to Wetzel County Commission for the Hundred Littleton Public Service District Rush Run Water Line Extension. The Wetzel County Commission will receive split year funding. \$175,000 will be funded in 2014 for engineering design and easement acquisition and the remaining \$1,325,000 to complete the project to follow in 2015. The project will extend water service to 82 homes in the Burton area of Wetzel County.



Marshall County P.S.D. #2 Project

The Marshall County Public Service District #2 is nearing the point of placing their project out for bid. The PSD serves the areas of Washington Lands and Roberts Ridge, with many additional branches serving lanes. They serve 667 customers and also provide water to the Marshall County PSD #4. The original system was built nearly 50 years ago, and originally served approximately 250 customers. Because of the age and increase in customers, the current system has limited storage capacity and areas with low pressure. This project will involve constructing a new 300,000 gallon storage tank and new booster station, rehab to an existing booster station, repair and rehab to the water treatment plant, water line replacement, fire hydrants, a radio read meter system, system mapping, an addition to the office, and other improvements. This will provide more consistent service to its customers, and a more efficiently run system. Pending some minor legal work, the PSD is hoping to place the project out for bid in March or April of this year. A USDA Rural Utilities Service loan for \$2,241,000 has been acquired to fund this project.

Northwestern Area Agency on Aging

FY 2014 Omnibus Spending Bill Released; OAA Nutrition Programs Earn Boost

The House Appropriations Chair Hal Rogers (R-KY) and Senate Appropriations Chair Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) released their comprehensive spending bill that includes full details of all of the 12 annual spending measures. When combined, these bills constitute an "omnibus" package. As the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) has previously reported, tomorrow marks the final day of the continuing resolution (CR) that is keeping federal discretionary funding flowing since the end of October's government shutdown. This new, omnibus bill replaces the CR and serves as the final word on FY 2014 spending.

What's Next?

There is not time for the omnibus measure to be approved by both chambers before the CR expires, so a short-term extension of the CR will be passed to buy leaders a few more days to complete the approval process on the omnibus measure. It is expected that the measure will ultimately pass both the House and Senate this week before lawmakers leave town for a one-week recess.

How Did Aging Programs Fare?

Like any appropriations bill, the omnibus creates winners and losers. As reported in n4a's December 12 Legislative Update, appropriators had a modest amount of "sequester

replacement" dollars to spread around the massive bill. It was not enough, however, to return all programs to FY 2012's higher levels of funding, as n4a had advocated for in our December Letter to Capitol Hill.



The big winner this time is the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III C nutrition programs, which received a significant boost. Luckily, no aging program n4a supports was significantly cut.

Instead, most programs were level funded-at FY 2013's post-sequester levels. Included in this category are Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III B Supportive Services, Title III D Preventive Health, Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program, both the Title VI Native American line items, and Title VII Elder Abuse and LTC Ombudsman programs.

A handful of programs saw very small increases over FY 2013 post-sequester levels. These include OAA Title V Senior Community Services Employment Program, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Elder Rights Support Activities, Lifespan

Respite and the Senior Medicare Patrol.

The bulk of funding added back to the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) budget went to the OAA Title III Nutrition programs (congregate and home-delivered meals). Subtitles III C1 and III C2 and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program were restored to just below FY 2012 levels, which is to say the amount of funding before the FY 2013 triple whammy of recessions, cuts and sequestration. It's clear that with modestly boosted funding provided to the Labor/HHS appropriators in the December bipartisan budget deal (e.g., the partially offset sequester), the intention was to restore funding to the OAA's nutrition programs above all of the other OAA and ACL programs. While n4a is thrilled to see funding restored to nearly FY 2012 levels for nutrition, it is disappointing that the same investment was not made in the many other cost-effective and successful OAA programs and services. Advocates will need to be very engaged in the FY 2015 budget process if we are to grow the base of funding for OAA overall.

In related news, the omnibus measure does not, unfortunately, provide the \$8 million for Adult Protective Services that the

President recommended and n4a endorsed; no funding was provided for FY 2014.

Please note that money from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) was appropriately directed to ACL for Chronic Disease Self-Management (\$8 million) and falls prevention (\$5 million). n4a worked in coalition with other aging groups to advocate for those allocations. The PPHF activities are funded by mandatory dollars but must be divvied up by appropriators.

Lastly, the bill approves the transfer of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIPs) from CMS to ACL. The transfer of administrative authority for SHIPs has been proposed by this Administration for several years and the move has the support of n4a as well as NASUAD.

This Legislative Update is an n4a membership benefit. For more information about these and other federal aging policy issues, please contact n4a's Senior Director, Public Policy and Advocacy Amy E. Gotwals (agotwals@n4a.org or 202.872.0888).

Spending Levels Set for the Remainder of FY14

Congress has passed, and the President signed, an omnibus spending bill to fund the federal government for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

The measure adheres to the trillion-dollar spending cap set by December's budget deal, the Bipartisan Budget Act (PL 113-67). The Act partially rolled back the sequester in FY14 and FY15, increasing total discretionary spending this year to \$1.012 trillion. Absent the budget deal, FY14 discretionary dollars would have been capped at \$967 billion, a \$20 billion decrease from FY13 post-sequester levels.

As a result of these partially restored funds, appropriators had more to work with in FY14 than they would have otherwise. However, the budget deal did not provide enough relief to allow lawmakers to return all discretionary program funding to pre-sequester FY12 levels, as NASUAD and other organizations had requested. Therefore, appropriators had to decide how to distribute the modest amount of restored funding among their assigned agencies and programs, across all 12 annual spending bills.

Under the negotiated deal, most Older Americans Act (OAA) programs will receive level-funding in FY14, relative to the

FY13 post-sequester levels. A few programs, including Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Elder Rights Support Activities, will see slight boosts. The OAA nutrition programs - Congregate and Home Delivered Meals, as well as the Nutrition Services Incentive Program - received the largest increases, bringing their FY14 funding to just below pre-sequester levels.

Additionally, the omnibus transfers mandatory dollars from the Affordable Care Act's Prevention and Public Health Fund to support activities at the Administration for Community Living (ACL), including Chronic Disease Self-Management (\$8 million); Elder Falls Prevention (\$5 million); and the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (\$14.7).

Unfortunately, the Elder Justice Act's Adult Protective Services Demonstration did not receive the \$8 million in first time discretionary funding as requested in the Administration's FY14 budget, but the omnibus does transfer administrative authority for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to ACL, as outlined in the President's recent budgets and supported by NASUAD.

GAO: One in Four Part D Contracts had Drug Plans Suppressed for Pricing Inaccuracy

A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released today found that during the first seven months of 2013, 25 percent of Part D contracts had one or more plans suppressed from Plan Finder, the Medicare website seniors use to choose their drug plans, due to pricing inaccuracy.

The GAO also found that between January 1, 2009 and July 31, 2013, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had taken more than 150 official compliance actions against plans for pricing inaccuracy- issuing 89 notices of noncompliance and 67 warning letters.

The report was requested in April by U.S. Sens. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Susan Collins (R-ME), the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, amid concerns over the reliability and usability of the Plan Finder website.

“Seniors should always have the right information when choosing a prescription drug plan,” said Nelson. “This report underscores the need for Medicare to continue to do everything it can to stop false information from being posted on Plan Finder. While I welcome the steps CMS plans to take this year to improve pricing accuracy, I’m going to closely monitor their progress.”

“In order for the Plan Finder to work, seniors must be able to get

accurate drug cost information if they are to understand their plan options and choose the plan that best suits their needs,” Collins said. “I am encouraged that the report finds that CMS has taken steps to ensure the accuracy of this information and urge the agency to continue to work to make sure seniors are able to navigate the website effectively.”

Key among the GAO’s findings:

- In 2012, 18 percent of Part D contracts had one or more plans that were suppressed from Plan Finder at least once, and, from January 1, 2013, through July 31, 2013, 25 percent of contracts had one or more plans that were suppressed at least once.
- Between January 1, 2009 and July 31, 2013, CMS issued 89 notices of noncompliance and 67 warning letters for inaccurate or incomplete drug pricing information.
- According to CMS documents, there has been only one instance in which CMS required a Part D plan sponsor to develop and implement a corrective action plan for compliance concerns related to Plan Finder pricing accuracy.
- For 2014, CMS plans to add an additional “display” quality measure that will indicate the extent to which point-of-sale prescription drug costs were lower

than prices posted on the plan finder.



According to the report, Part D plan sponsors are required by CMS to submit

accurate drug pricing information, which the agency uses to give seniors an online estimate of each plan’s annual drug costs and out-of-pocket expenses. When a plan is suppressed from the Plan Finder website, its pricing information is removed and beneficiaries are unable sign up for the plan on site until the sponsor submits accurate prices. In cases where plan sponsors repeatedly submit false or incomplete information, CMS can issue noncompliance notices or warning letters. In more egregious cases, CMS can also force plan sponsors to take corrective action or seek enforcement actions such as civil penalties, payment suspensions or contract terminations.

The report found nearly 24 million beneficiaries were enrolled in Part D plans in January 2013. Last year, CMS had 630 contracts with Part D plan sponsors who together offered coverage through 2,660 stand-alone and Medicare Advantage drug plans.

Older Americans Month Theme 2014 Announced

Each May, the nation celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize older Americans for their contributions and provide them with information to help them stay healthy and active. This year, the focus is on injury prevention with the theme **Safe Today. Healthy Tomorrow.**

Older adults are at a much higher risk of unintentional injury and even death than the rest of the population. Unintentional injuries to this population result in millions of medically treated injuries and more than 30,000 deaths every year. With a focus on safety during Older Americans Month, the Administration for Community Living plans to use this opportunity to raise awareness about this critical issue. By taking control of their safety, older Americans can live longer, healthier lives.

Information to help your organization celebrate Older Americans Month will be coming soon!



Join n4a in the Lone Star State at the 39th Annual Conference and Tradeshow on July 12 - 16, 2014, Dallas, Texas at the Hyatt Regency Dallas, as we showcase the most innovative policies, programs and services that assist older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers to lead independent and productive lives.

Registration Opening Soon!

Registration for the n4a 2014 Conference & Tradeshow will open in March. Review registration rates and more information at www.n4aconference.org.

Stay at the Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion Tower

Enjoy downtown Dallas accommodations in the heart of the historic district—a shopping and dining mecca—with spacious guest rooms and the convenience of being just steps away from all the Conference activities.

The n4a group rate is \$159 per night and is available through Tuesday, June 10, 2014, or until the group block is full, whichever occurs first. Reserve your room today.

Sponsorship, Tradeshow and Advertising Opportunities Available

Benefit from this unique occasion to build brand awareness and to create working relationships that are valuable and relevant as the entire aging industry takes on the enormous challenges and opportunities to help our country “age.” See the n4a 2014 Sponsorship, Tradeshow and Advertising Prospectus.

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Transportation Department

Congress Addresses New Transportation Act

Although it seems like the current federal transportation act was just passed, it is time once again for Congress to begin addressing new legislation. On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law a new transportation reauthorization bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The bill took effect on October 1, 2012. Unlike prior legislation, MAP-21 has only a two year duration and will expire on September 30, 2014. The prior bill, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law in 2005, and expired on September 30, 2009. Numerous temporary extensions were necessary to keep programs funded during the three year gap.

House Transportation Committee Chairman, Rep. Bill Shuster recently stated that he wants the new funding bill to go to the House floor by August. He is aiming for August so it will have a chance of passing the Senate before the current bill expires.

At a recent committee hearing, support for a longer bill, perhaps six years, was noted. Others noted their support for an increase in funding, which will likely require lawmakers to explore funding options beyond the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). The HTF is funded by the 18.4 cent per gallon federal gas tax that has remained unchanged since 1993. There is concern that the HTF is being depleted to the

extent that cash will not be available to meet obligations in late spring or summer of this year. The USDOT may have to slow reimbursement payment to state agencies to avoid draining the HTF. Rep. Shuster has urged transportation leaders to "educate" lawmakers on what the industry requires in a new funding bill.

In the November elections, U.S. voters approved 91% of ballot measures to increase or extend funding for highways, bridges and transit. Successful ballot measures were approved with approximately 67% of the vote. This indicates general public recognition for the need to increase transportation revenues.

Management Services Department

West Virginia FY 2014 CDBG Small Cities Block Grant Program Application Deadline Announced

The West Virginia Development Office recently announced the Small Cities Block Grant application deadline as May 21, 2014. The State expects to have approximately \$7 million to distribute for new projects under the FY2014 Program. It is expected the WVDO will make smaller "Design Grants" for at least some of the

funded projects, with the balance of the funds requested to be committed from future years, when the projects are ready to go to bid.

As has been the case for the many years now, the State's priority for these funds will be for "reliable water and sewer infrastructure projects". Additionally, the area

to be served by the project must document at least 51% benefit to low-to moderate income persons, through the use of American Community Survey (ACS) or a properly conducted income survey.

Another pre-requisite to making application for SCBG funds is the submittal of a Preliminary

Application to the West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council (WVIJDC). The WVIJDC is responsible for reviewing all state-funded water and sewer infrastructure projects and determining their feasibility. Only projects found to be technically feasible by the WVIJDC are eligible for SCBG funds. In order to meet the May 21, 2014 SCBG application deadline, an applicant must first submit a Preliminary Application to WVIJDC by March 10, 2014. Belomar staff can assist with the Preliminary Application as well as the SCBG application for communities with feasible and competitive projects.

It should be noted that both these applications require the completion of a Preliminary Engineering Report as well as some financial reports, therefore projects without an engineering firm under contract at this point will probably not meet the deadlines above.

If your community has a potential water or sewer project, please contact our office to discuss the specifics and develop a plan of action.



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Regional Development/Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The 2013 Annual Update to the Regional Development/Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is available on our website at www.belomar.org.

Mark Your Calendar!

*The next Bel-O-Mar Regional Council/BOMTS/AAA Meeting
will be held on Thursday, February 27, 2014 at noon
Moundsville Country Club
Moundsville, WV*

*To save mailing and printing costs, we will be sending the notices out next week by
email. If you prefer to receive your notice by snailmail,
please contact LuAnn Kennedy at 304-242-1800*

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