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**LARRY CRAIG**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
October 23, 2006

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**Older Americans Act Gets Better With Age**  
**by Senator Larry Craig**

Some things do get better with age, but usually, federal law isn't one of them. In this case, however, we have a rare exception.

On October 17, President Bush signed into law the re-authorization of legislation which could benefit over 170,000 Idahoans - those who are age 60 or older. The Older Americans Act provides funding for home delivered meals, and other services that are important to help older citizens live independent lives.

I served as chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging from 2001 through 2004, and last year served as the Chairman of the Economic Security Subcommittee of the White House Conference on Aging. Although I am no longer chairman of the Aging committee, I am still a member of it, and it was this experience that has sparked my particular interest and effort in seeing this legislation approved.

Advances in science continue to prolong our lives, and as the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire, aging issues are more important than ever. There are now approximately 50,000 Americans who are 100 years old or older, and by 2050, just 45 years from now, the number of centenarians will be closer to one million.

Imagine one million people living in the United States who are 100 years and older. That's phenomenal. As we age, though, it's important that people eat right. My wife, Suzanne, is a dietician and has helped me realize the importance of proper nutrition, especially for those who are older. The Older Americans Act helps provide the funding to do just that.

The Older Americans Act was originally signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 14, 1965 and has generally been reauthorized every five years since, with changes made to the law during each reauthorization.

This has helped the Older Americans Act stay up-to-date with the evolving challenges faced by the elderly. Unfortunately, some of the biggest crimes against the elderly today are economic ones committed by greedy family members. The American Psychological Association reports that each year, an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of physical, psychological, or other forms of abuse

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and neglect. For every case of elder abuse and neglect reported to authorities, experts estimate that there may be as many as 5 cases not reported.

Under this reauthorization, the U.S. Assistant Secretary on Aging will now designate an individual responsible for elder abuse prevention services who will coordinate federal elder justice activities. This is an important improvement to the law.

By having the federal government lend some leadership, we can help the states and local governments put these abusers behind bars, and ensure the well-being of our older citizens.

The newly signed legislation also expands the National Family Caregiver Support Program which provides caregiver support services to grandparents caring for a grandchild, including children with disabilities.

I was also pleased that the reauthorization made some modifications to the Older American Community Service Employment Program which helps older people gain employment and training for new jobs. That is a feature to the law that will help improve implementation of the program in Idaho's rural communities.

As this reauthorization moved through the legislative process, I was proud to be a supporter of it. The changes made to the law will benefit seniors for years to come. Just like our senior citizens, the Older Americans Act keeps getting better with age.