



**Testimony of Annette Smith,
National Neighbors Silver Ambassador and Older American**

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United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies**

Greetings, Chairman Rehberg, Ranking Member DeLauro, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee. My name is Annette Smith and I am a 68-year-old woman living in Rocklin, California. It is an honor to submit this testimony before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. I believe that the government's support of programs under the Older Americans Act is truly life-saving to millions of older adults in this country. By supporting the President's proposed funding increase for the Older Americans Act in 2013, this Congress can show that it cares about the problems facing me and my fellow senior citizens and is willing to do something about them. I encourage you not to stop there. In addition to supporting the President's proposed increases, I urge you to restore funding to the Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program to its Fiscal Year 2010 level of \$825 Million.

I would like to talk about my experiences as a National Neighbors Silver Ambassador and as a community leader for the Lyn Roc Senior Complex. From each of these roles, I developed a deep understanding of the challenges facing my generation —especially those obstacles that affect our ability to remain in our homes.

National Community Reinvestment Coalition's National Neighbors Silver program is designed to empower, organize, and support economically vulnerable, older adults. It does so by offering a platform for community-based organizations, like mine, to develop and share solutions that keep seniors in their homes and help them age in place. Across the country, National Neighbors Silver partner organizations recruit older adults, including myself, to serve as community ambassadors. Together, we identify the critical financial concerns facing older adults and form plans to address those concerns.

I reside in the Lyn Roc Senior Complex and am one of the founders of the Lyn Roc Tenant Association. Our board consists of individuals, ages 68 to 91, who fight to improve living conditions in our community and prevent mistreatment from occurring in our complex. We also play an active role in advocating on behalf of the housing needs of all older adults, both locally and nationally. In this role, I have witnessed the enormous importance of the OAA programs that allow my neighbors to age in place with dignity and confidence. Many of our community members are low-income individuals who would not be able to stay in their homes were it not for OAA programs. Transportation assistance and in-home medical care allows us to not only stay in our homes, but also maintain our independence. The medical screenings and nutrition programs help seniors in our community stay healthy and eliminate the sometimes impossible challenge of traveling for routine medical care. Finally, the legal services provided through the OAA equip seniors with the tools they need to fight back against individuals who seek to take advantage of their financial means.

The truth is that seniors face unique challenges and hardships. Many of us cannot solve those problems alone and don't know where to look for help. I am fortunate enough to live in a community with supportive neighbors, but these programs are of even greater importance to those without nearby family and friends. The OAA is a lifeline that allows many low-income seniors to meet their most basic needs while keeping our homes, our dignity, and our independence intact.

In addition to helping seniors meet their basic needs, OAA's SCSEP program is the best option to develop new skills to find jobs. I believe that almost every senior could benefit from the kind of job training made possible through SCSEP. The SCSEP program helps us take that next step when we want to re-enter the workforce and support ourselves. When you empower seniors through programs like SCSEP, you not only help the individual, you help entire communities. Older adults have the potential to make real changes in their communities that benefit everyone.

I thank you again for your funding increase of the Older Americans Act. It is so important that we do everything in our power to support our older adults. Still, more can be done. Please restore funding for SCSEP for the benefit of seniors and their communities.