



Senator Herb Kohl

United States Senator for Wisconsin



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September is National Senior Center Month and it gives us the opportunity to recognize the vital service they provide in our communities. Across the country, nearly 11,000 senior centers serve 1 million older adults each day, making them one of the most widely used services among America's older adults. Senior centers serve as a hub for older adults—connecting them to indispensable services that can help them stay healthy and independent. Every year I visit senior centers throughout our state; they are places filled with high energy, many activities and a heartbeat of the community.

According to the National Council on Aging, research shows that older adults who participate in senior center programs experience measurable improvements in their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental and economic well-being. With the large baby boom generation approaching retirement, senior centers will continue to develop new programs and opportunities to meet the needs and interests of this dynamic generation of older adults.

The federal Older Americans Act (OAA) recognizes senior centers as a community focal point for older Americans and provides funding for some services, including congregate meals. OAA programs provide assistance to over 10 million older adults by helping them to live independently in their communities through home care services, congregate and home delivered meals, senior transportation, family caregiver support, and other services. In fact, 386,000 seniors in Wisconsin alone rely on OAA programs. As our elder population grows, many more people will need critical support services like those that are provided under the OAA.

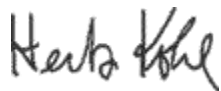
Not surprisingly, the need for these OAA programs and services has grown during this tough economy. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and Chair of the Senate Aging Committee, I have worked to strengthen OAA programs each year, and hope to find more ways to support

them.

The OAA is due to be renewed next year and in preparation for this reauthorization I held an Aging Committee field hearing at the Wilson Senior Center in Milwaukee. Many Wisconsin residents joined us to highlight the important role that OAA programs play in the lives of our seniors. We discussed the ways in which aging services could be modernized, so that we can bring these services to more seniors, more efficiently. We received many fantastic ideas and feedback from the hearing, and these ideas are proving to be very helpful as we work on a new bill.

Finally, given the central role they play in our communities, I hope everyone will join me in taking a moment to be thankful for not only the senior centers themselves, but also for the great work of their dedicated staff members. They make these facilities warm and welcoming to the entire community. I hope you will join me in recognizing their contribution to making Wisconsin a great place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Herb Kohl". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.