



Senator Herb Kohl

United States Senator for Wisconsin



[Home](#) [Biography](#) [News](#) [Issues & Legislation](#) [Constituent Services](#) [Contact Senator Kohl](#)
[Unsubscribe](#)

It is very easy to lose sight of problems that aren't right in front of us every day. Elder abuse often gets much less attention than it deserves. To those victims of abuse, there is no bigger problem in the world. To the rest of us charged with stopping it, it should be a priority.

The physical, mental and financial abuse of our nation's seniors is all too common. In 2009 in Wisconsin, over 5,000 cases of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation were reported – this was a 9 percent increase over 2008. These crimes are being committed by people because their victims are often fragile and their chance of getting caught is slim. And, because elder abuse often goes unreported, the true number of victims is likely much higher. It is also estimated that financial exploitation of seniors costs the nation an estimated \$2.6 billion annually.

With this in mind, I recently called on the Justice Department to make the growing problem of elder abuse a national priority. I asked that elder abuse be added to the list of priorities for states to consider when requesting funding for federal Victim Assistance Grants. These grants are used by states to provide emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling and other services to victims of crimes.

Earlier this year, I also convened a Special Committee on Aging hearing on elder abuse and senior citizen advocate Marie-Therese Connolly was among the experts who provided testimony. She has worked tirelessly to push elder abuse into the national spotlight, so I was pleased to see her included among the prestigious 2011 MacArthur Fellowship awards announced last week. The MacArthur Fellowship grants are awarded annually to a small number of social advocates, artists, thinkers and historians, and provide each recipient \$500,000 in no-strings-attached support over five years

Marie-Therese Connolly has a great deal of knowledge and experience and we

have worked closely in recent years in developing nursing home and background check policies as well as the End Abuse Later in Life Act and the Elder Abuse Victims Act. She also worked with us on the Elder Justice Act, which was signed into law last year. She is one of the strongest voices for combating the largely hidden but immense problem of elder abuse and mistreatment, and she is certainly deserving of this honor.

As we look ahead, America's population of older adults is projected to increase by 60 percent over the next 25 years. If we fail to stop these problems now, millions of elderly victims will continue to suffer in silence. We have made some strides forward, but there is still a great deal of work to do. Let's follow the example of Marie Therese and all work together to protect seniors.

Sincerely,

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