



National Senior Citizens Law Center

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF LOW-INCOME OLDER ADULTS

## INCOME NETWORK ALERT

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NSCLC invites you to join us in protecting income security, health care and court access for low income older adults.

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Please help us protect the rights of low income older adults and persons with disabilities.

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Providing Legal Support to the Aging-Advocacy Network

Case consultation help for advocates

### Vital SSI Lifeline for Refugees at Risk Bills Will Addresses Deadline

On September 30, 2011, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will expire for many refugees, asylees and other humanitarian immigrants, but there is hope that their benefits will be extended.

A bill has just been introduced in the Senate by Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) which would extend the current nine year eligibility period for an additional nine years until Sept. 30, 2020. The extension would be fully funded by a new \$25 fee on applications for diversity visas.

In the House of Representatives, a bill (HR 2763) was introduced in August by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA) that would extend SSI benefits for two years.

Most of those affected are older than the general SSI population and are unable to learn English or become citizens. Waiver of the language requirement requires people to have been here 15 years in order to naturalize, but those in question have only been here seven to nine years.

Also, because of immigration rules, many are often unable to naturalize in the seven-year timeframe, e.g. persons who have been granted asylum and some Cuban-Haitian entrants.

Estimates show up to 4,600 people will lose their SSI, the only financial lifeline available to most of this extremely vulnerable population, if benefits are not extended at the end of the month. An additional 500 people could lose their benefits every month thereafter. Allowing SSI benefits to expire will have detrimental human costs for people who, in almost all

cases, cannot return to their home countries.

Where SSI is not available, it will likely result in increased reliance by them on homeless shelters, emergency rooms and other community supports already stressed in the economic downturn. Extending SSI benefits for this vulnerable group is of grave importance not only to beneficiaries themselves but also for the sake of our local communities and our society at large.

SSI provides minimal income support to eight million people who have virtually no other income or resources, all of them at least 65 years old or unable to work due to disability. Members of Congress need to hear from advocates that this is a serious issue needing quick resolution.

See the Senate bill...

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