

Calendar

'Thinking & Preparing Ahead' Caregiving and Long-Term Care Community Forums and Resource Fairs

March and April in Portland, Salem, Medford, Coos Bay, Eugene, Bend and Pendleton. For details, visit www.aarp.org/or or www.oregonspromise.org, or e-mail oraarp@aarp.org.

Free Tax Assistance

Through April 15 AARP Tax-Aide offers free tax preparation and filing assistance. To find the site nearest you, visit www.aarp.org/taxaide.

Connect for Change Day

May 6
State Capitol, Salem.
Help improve health and long-term care. For information, visit www.aarp.org/or.

Volunteer

Support independent living.

Help ensure that Oregon's older residents and people with disabilities get the care they need in their homes and communities. Call 503-513-7375 or visit www.oregonspromise.org.

Join a Community Action Team.

Get involved in your community working on the issues you care most about. Call 503-513-7360 or e-mail oraarp@aarp.org.

Ethically Right, Fiscally Savvy

Preserving long-term care and fixing health care are not only the right things to do; they're smart for the state's economy.

WITH A budget shortfall estimated at more than \$3 billion, state lawmakers and residents face harsh choices. Thoughtful decision making that takes into account both short- and long-term considerations has never been more critical.

Proposed cuts to long-term care services for older residents and people with disabilities will cost the state much more money in the long run than they will save in the short run. And such cuts will leave thousands of the state's most vulnerable residents without adequate care.

Research from the consulting group ECONorthwest shows that Oregon's home and community-based care system

is an economic engine that leverages hundreds of millions in federal funding. Reductions in services would likely lead to thousands of lost long-term care jobs and hundreds of millions of lost dollars in related economic activity.

Because job losses and economic woes are compounded by soaring health care costs, investing in health and tackling health care reform are among the most promising solutions to these challenges. Recent analysis by the state Department of Human Services found that human services provide one-third of the economic activity in the only sector that gained jobs last December: health care.



AARP and other advocates join John Mullin of the Human Services Coalition to highlight the "shovel-ready" economic activity and jobs, such as property manager, that investments in health and long-term care can create.

John Mullin, co-chair of the Human Services Coalition of Oregon, summed it up best: "Serving the needs of vulnerable Oregonians is not only the right thing to do but also provides a great return on investment and is good for the economy."

To get a "front-row seat" at the Legislature, tune in at www.oregonchannel.org. For legislative information, visit www.leg.state.or.us.

Have news delivered to your inbox.

We're going paperless. Fill out the form on page 2 and drop it in the mail to receive e-mails on state news. Or register at www.aarp.org/stateemail.



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Clackamas, OR 97015



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Between 2000 and 2007, the average insurance premium paid each year by an Oregon family increased by 85.2 percent.

Learn about Oregon's innovative long-term care system and the jeopardy it's in: www.oregonspromise.org.

Volunteer Opportunities Abound

From one day a year to a few hours a week or month, there are a variety of ways and chances to help your community.

Campaign for Oregon's Seniors and People With Disabilities. Help preserve Oregon's model of home and community-based long-term care. Visit www.oregonspromise.org, e-mail info@oregonspromise.org, or call 503-513-7375.

Community Action Teams. Join other AARP members and local organizations to work on projects in your community. Call 503-513-7360 or e-mail oraarp@aarp.org.

Faith in Action Network of Oregon. This coalition of local interfaith volunteer caregiving programs and religious congregations serves older Oregonians and residents with disabilities. Visit www.faithinactionoregon.org.

Oregon Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO). LTCO volunteers advocate for residents in nursing homes and other long-term care settings. Call 1-800-522-2602 or visit www.oregon.gov/ltco.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Part of a national program, Oregon's RSVP works with local nonprofits to offer volunteering opportunities to people 55 years and older. To find a program near you, visit www.oregonvolunteers.org/rsvp.

Senior Health Insurance Benefits and Assistance (SHIBA). Working as part of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, SHIBA volunteers provide free counseling to help older Oregonians navigate Medicare and other health benefits programs. Call 1-800-722-4134 or visit www.oregonshiba.org.

Read more about volunteering at www.aarp.org/makeadifference.

Voices on the Street

AARP Oregon asked some of its volunteers and community collaborators why they think health and long-term care are crucial issues and what message they would deliver to their legislators.



Ed Alcantar
Volunteer, AARP, and Chair, Aging and Disabled Services Advisory Council, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Medford volunteer Alcantar, a former carpet salesman and production manager, is active in helping ensure those who are most vulnerable have a voice. His message boils down to this: "Older citizens have helped make our state what it is, blazing trails, sacrificing and working for us. These are our mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends and neighbors. Oregonians deserve long-term care that works for them."



Lorraine Griffey
Volunteer
Commissioner, Elders in Action Commission

Seventeen years of caring for her husband, who has multiple sclerosis, got Griffey involved in advocacy work. The Gresham volunteer wants to help others get access to

information and resources. She says: "It's critical to safeguard the values of Oregon's cost-effective system for current and future generations. Quality of life shouldn't be determined by age."



Phyllis Rand
Volunteer, AARP, and Chair, Northwest Senior and Disability Services Advisory Council

Rand, of Salem, has been involved in advocacy for older residents and people with disabilities for 26 years. She says preserving Oregon's long-term care system is a "no-brainer: we can care for people where they want — in their homes and communities — for a fraction of the cost. Doing anything else just doesn't make sense and isn't right."



Jane Baumgarten
Volunteer, AARP and League of Women Voters Volunteer

A former teacher, Baumgarten has dedicated her "retirement" years in North Bend to fighting for better care and healthier communities. She explains: "From consumers who are paying increasingly more for care and businesses whose bottom lines are affected, to providers and the government, the concern over skyrocketing health care costs is pervasive."



Steven Marks
Physician, Chief Medical Officer, PacificSource Health Plans

"Necessary, overdue and possible to achieve," says Marks of Eugene, who offers his time at a Volunteers in Medicine clinic. He says fundamental reform is critical because people and businesses simply can't afford escalating costs and thinks it's a disgrace that our nation has so many people without insurance, with limited access to needed care and who still suffer from preventable and easily treated conditions.



Christine Chin Ryan
Chair, Oregon Small Business for Responsible Leadership and the Oregon Small Business Healthcare Initiative

Chin Ryan, of Portland, reports that nearly annual double-digit increases in health care costs have been crippling her small business and thousands more across the state: "The Legislature must act now and seize this opportunity. The results will give direct relief and economic stimulus to the bottom line for Oregon businesses and provide Oregonians the quality, affordable health care they need and deserve."

Register for online updates on state news.

Or sign up at www.aarp.org/stateemail



AARP will soon discontinue the printed version of the state newsletter you receive. But you can still get the state news you look forward to via e-mail updates. Just fill out the information below and mail to:

AARP Oregon
9200 SE Sunnybrook Blvd., Suite 410
Clackamas, OR 97015

Yes, keep in touch with me by e-mail about AARP activities, events, and member benefits.

E-mail address (please print clearly)

Name

Date of Birth

State ZIP Code

Forty-one percent of Oregonians report they are now caring for an aging loved one or expect to do so in the next 10 years.

Read about the Oregon Health Fund Board's plan to fix the state's health care system; visit www.oregon.gov/ohppr/hfb.



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1 in 5

**The number of Oregonians
 expected to be 65 or older
 by 2025.**

Q&A

DHS Makes a Difference

Dr. Bruce Goldberg has served as director of the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) since 2005. He previously headed the Office for Oregon Health Policy and Research and served as medical director for CareOregon, public health officer for Columbia County and on the faculty at Oregon Health and Sciences University.



Q. Tell us about human services being “shovel ready.” What does that mean?

A. It means that DHS is ready to turn federal stimulus dollars immediately into jobs and economic activity:

□ Providing direct economic help through cash assistance and food stamps for those who have lost their jobs or are underemployed.

□ Enabling those dollars to move locally, creating economic activity to help area businesses and provide stability for families and communities.

□ Injecting \$13 million into Oregon’s economy every day through payments to doctors, service providers, counties and other recipients.

□ Providing safe passage to keep people working, like long-term care assistance for 12,170 seniors so they can live independently in their homes — which means their children don’t have to leave work to check on them.

Q. What do you think about Oregon’s home and community-based model of long-term care?

A. One of our most unrecognized success stories is that we lead the nation in our approach to long-term care. Unlike in most states, where care is provided mostly in institutional settings, Oregon has developed a system in which more people get the care they need in their home or a homelike setting. That’s what people want and it’s a cost-effective way of delivering services. In the current

budget crisis, we must protect what we have and think about ways to improve this system.

Q. What are your thoughts about Oregon achieving real health care reforms this year?

A. It’s been too long in coming. It’s a stain on our state that people can’t afford health care, that so many uninsured Oregonians can’t get the care they need and so many insured residents can’t afford it. For as much as we spend as a society on health care, quality is sorely lacking.

Health care remains one of the most important issues for Oregonians and the nation. Gov. [Ted] Kulongoski (D), the Legislature and the Oregon Health Fund Board all want to make health care more affordable and make Oregon a state where everyone gets the care they need. I think we can make great progress.

To learn more about Dr. Goldberg and the work of DHS, visit www.oregon.gov/DHS. To read the full Q&A, visit www.aarp.org/or.

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR

Economy Spurs, Requires Engagement



The current health and economic situation can seem overwhelmingly bleak. The number of uninsured Americans has increased by 22 percent over the last eight years. Despite spending the most per capita on health care, the United States ranks 37th in the world in quality of outcomes. In Oregon, with a projected budget shortfall of more than \$3 billion, human services are again on the chopping block. With a decade of cuts to services for older Oregonians and people with disabilities behind us, we must work hard to protect the most vulnerable.

However, I am hopeful. I have never before observed a more

engaged citizenry — from the unprecedented numbers of young people and previously unengaged who voted in the last election to the urgency and commitment to action I observe daily. Recent surveys show that Oregonians, particularly older residents, continue to volunteer and engage in their communities in higher percentages than people in most other states.

The tough economic times should only strengthen our resolve. Get involved and engaged. There are so many ways to make a difference, on your terms and in your time. The moment is now. Together, we really do have the power to make it better.

Jerry Cohen leads the AARP Oregon team as state director.

“We must work hard to protect the most vulnerable.”

Resources

To visit online:

AARP Public Policy Institute – ‘The Cost of Doing Nothing: What’s at Stake Without Health Care Reform’

http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/health/m7_nothing.pdf

AARP Real Relief

www.aarp.org/realrelief

Divided We Fail

www.dividedwefail.org

National Coalition on Health Care – Economic Cost Fact Sheets

www.nchc.org

Oregon Health Fund Board

<http://healthfundboard.oregon.gov>

Oregon Prescription Drug Program

www.opdp.gov

Oregon Health Policy and Research

www.oregon.gov/ohppr

Oregon Network of Care

www.oregon.networkofcare.org

Oregon Unemployment Insurance

www.employment.oregon.gov

To read:

To receive free copies of the following publications, call 1-866-554-5360 toll free or e-mail oraarp@aarp.org:

Oregon Caregiving Resource Guide – D18647(1107)

Healing America’s Health System – D19039(608)

Build Up Your Nest Egg – D19038(608)

Budget Balancing – D19037(608)

Mending Medicare – D19036(608)

Keeping It Afloat, Cutting the Gap in Social Security – D18902(608)

DIVIDED WE FAIL

In a Tough Economy, Disappearing Coverage Compounds Job Losses

THE WEAKENED ECONOMY has left many Americans with growing uncertainty about their finances and health care. A recent AARP survey found that 21 percent of Americans age 45 to 64 are not very confident or not at all confident that they will be able to afford medical care in 2009.

“Boomers are at a high risk of becoming uninsured, and they’re particularly worried,” said AARP Senior Vice President Cheryl Matheis. “They’re concerned about losing their job-based coverage or not keeping up with the high premiums of individual coverage. And they don’t have the safety net that Medicare provides for older people.”

Diane Sparks, 57, recently found herself in this unenviable position. Last November, the Oregon City woman was laid off after seven years as membership director at the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland – a reflection of the area’s housing market slowdown.

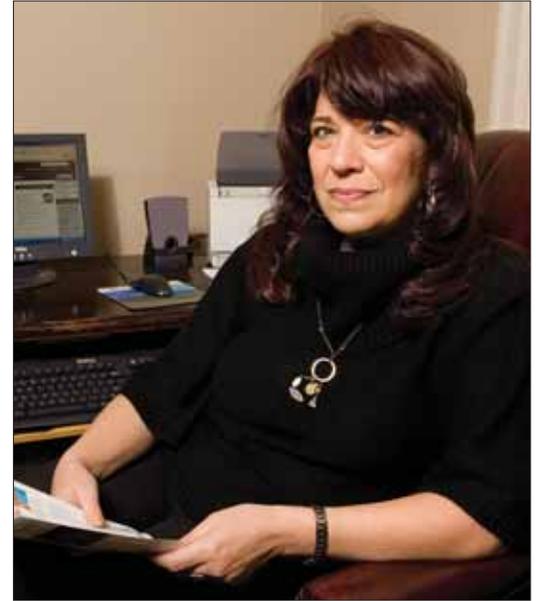
For Sparks, who is single, no job meant no health insurance. Though she is receiving temporary unemployment assistance while she searches for her next job, the high monthly costs of COBRA continuation coverage had to take a backseat to mortgage and car payments.

Although Sparks is blessed with good health that she attributes to an active lifestyle, she worries about an unexpected illness or accident. “It can cause a panic sometimes if I spend too much time thinking about it,” she said. “But I work to stay focused and engaged, and just be very careful. It’s one step at a time.”

Sparks is not alone. Oregon’s unemployment rate has skyrocketed to the fifth highest in the nation, now at 9 percent (the national average is 7.2 percent). And this trend is expected to continue for the short term.

With so many in danger of becoming unemployed and health care costs continuing to rise, straining families and businesses alike, it is crucial that Oregon harness this opportunity to fix its health care system, according to Jerry Cohen, AARP Oregon state director. “We simply can’t afford to wait.”

A recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that Americans overwhelmingly agree with Cohen’s sentiment. Nearly three-quarters of those polled (73 percent) viewed health care reform as a top priority for the new president and Congress, ranking it ahead of issues like fighting terrorism,



Diane Sparks of Oregon City searches for job leads at an associate’s office at a mortgage company. She is staying upbeat, despite having been laid off and having lost health coverage.

reducing the federal budget deficit and improving public schools.

An AARP poll of Oregonians conducted in December 2008 affirms this support and sense of urgency: More than seven in 10 reported that it is extremely or very important for the governor and Legislature to pass health care reform legislation this year.

Carol Robinson, interim executive director of the Oregon Health Fund Board, said a strong blueprint for reform exists through the recommendations in the board’s work and public input gathered over the past 18 months.

“Oregon has the opportunity to become a national leader in stemming the rising costs of health care by making smart changes to the delivery system and streamlining the state’s own health purchasing, saving billions in the next decade,” Robinson said. “Two tracks for real health care reform must happen simultaneously: expanding coverage for low-income Oregonians by capturing over \$1 billion of federal matching dollars, and lowering health costs by taking steps identified in the Oregon Health Fund Board’s plan.”

The Oregon Legislature now has the Oregon Health Fund Board’s set of recommendations before it. For more information or to make sure your voice is heard, visit www.aarp.org/getinvolved or www.aarp.org/or. To read more about health care reform and the Divided We Fail initiative, please visit www.dividedwefail.org.

Just 53 percent of Oregon businesses offered health insurance to employees in 2004, the smallest share since 1998.

Looking for full-time, part-time or flex-time jobs with age-friendly employers? Visit www.aarp.org/jobs to get started.