

## ***US Congress Fails to Include \$ for Lifespan Respite Act in Budget***

Congress approved a \$556 billion bill right before the Congressional Holiday Recess to fund most of the federal government through September 2008, ending a year-long budget fight with the President by also including new money for the Iraq war. The President signed it into law on December 26, 2007.

The final compromise bill included significantly less money for critical health, social services and education funding than the original funding bill passed by Congress and vetoed by the President. In addition, the final bill does not include money to implement the Lifespan Respite Act.

"The new year will undoubtedly be much brighter," said Jill Kagan, ARCH NRC Chair, " We will regroup and re-energize to make sure we have Lifespan Respite Funding in 2009!"

***ACTION: Our goal this year is to find new Congressional champions on both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. This is a critical next step if Lifespan Respite funding is to be a reality.***

Take the time during this Congressional recess (most of January) to reach out to your federal legislators. Thank them for their past support, and make an appointment to meet with them while they are in their home districts. Remind them that the nation's family caregivers are waiting for respite and they can't wait much longer. It is especially important to make contact if your Representative or Senator serves on the Appropriations Committee (list attached), but ALL CONTACTS are important and provide an opportunity to educate.

To identify your federal legislators, visit [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org) and type in your zip code. You can also find local district office phone numbers on this site -- the best way to contact them in January.

### **MESSAGE:**

-- in 2006, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Lifespan Respite Care Act (PL 109-442) authorizing the program through FY 2011. However, Congress has failed on its promise to deliver respite services to the nation's 50 million family caregivers by withholding funding.

-- Health and longterm care must be addressed in this upcoming election year. Increasingly, nearly every family in America will be dealing with the care of a loved one, friend or neighbor with a disabling or chronic condition -- and these family members vote!!

-- Respite is the number one service most often requested by family caregivers, yet it is in critically short supply, inaccessible, or unaffordable regardless of the age or disability of the individual needing assistance. While the focus has been on making sure families have the option of providing care at home, little attention has been paid to the needs of the family caregivers who make this possible.

-- Close to 80% of all long-term care is now provided at home by family caregivers to children and adults with serious conditions, including mental health issues, ALS, MS, traumatic brain injury, cancer, paralysis, developmental and physical disabilities, cognitive impairments and

Alzheimer's. Parents and family caregivers are the backbone of the longterm care system and save the government billions of dollars annually.

-- Most families take great joy in providing loving care at home. But research continues to document the often severe economic, health and emotional challenges faced by caregivers as they struggle to provide this care with little or no support. Respite has been shown to help alleviate the stress brought on by many of these challenges, but we still fail to invest in this cost-effective strategy. The result could be costly, as families turn to institutional, nursing home or foster care as their only option -- or even tragic as incidents of abuse and neglect are increasingly documented.

-- Let's begin the New Year with a commitment and the resolve to fully fund Lifespan Respite in FY 2009 and keep families together, healthy and safe.

**MAKE A CALL YOURSELF AND THEN PASS ON THIS MESSAGE AND ALERT TO YOUR NETWORKS, EMAIL LISTS, NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.**

**Have a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year!!**

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[www.archrespite.org/nrc.htm](http://www.archrespite.org/nrc.htm)

*ARCH National Respite Locator* at [www.respitelocator.org](http://www.respitelocator.org)