



Idaho Commission on Aging

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Transmittal # 7

April 18, 2006

TO: Workforce Development Council

FROM: Lois S. Bauer, Administrator
Idaho Commission on Aging

SUBJECT: Proposed legislation to create a "Frontier Section" within the Senior Community Service Employment portion of the Older Americans Act (see attached).

ACTION REQUESTED: None. For information only.

BACKGROUND: At the last Workforce Development Council meeting, the Idaho Commission on Aging obtained Council endorsement of the "Frontier Section" recommendation which had been accepted as a final policy recommendation by the White House Conference on Aging. The intent is to address the unique circumstances of older individuals residing in predominantly rural areas and the related challenges in providing substantive work experience and training opportunities.

Specifically, the Frontier legislation would provide *eligibility flexibility and authority to use a larger portion of existing grant funds for transportation assistance, distance learning, computer training, occupational/skill training, front-line staff, and other types of participant support (eye glasses, safety boots, assistance with prescriptions, etc.)* The proposal is budget neutral; it allows the use of existing funds to better serve older individuals residing in frontier areas.

The Idaho Commission on Aging has since developed the recommendation into draft legislation and testified about the need for such change before the U. S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. Our overall goal is to obtain broad support for further congressional consideration.

Attachments

Attachment A**FRONTIER BILL****Senior Community Service Employment for Older Americans****A BILL**

To amend Title V, Community Service Employment for Older Americans, of the Older Americans Act to create a "Frontier" section to address the unique needs, circumstances, and challenges in serving low-income older individuals residing in frontier areas.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Frontier Community Service Employment for Older Americans Act of 2006".

(a) Congress makes the following findings:

SECTION. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**(a) FINDINGS -**

(1) There is no distinction or acknowledgement of the unique needs of "Frontier" communities in the current Title V law.

(2) Many low-income individuals in need of work experience and training cannot currently qualify for the Title V Program because Federal eligibility regulations and policies do not appropriately recognize the unique nature and needs of frontier areas and those who live in them. This bill will improve older workers' access to community work experience and job training services.

(3) Under the existing statute and policies, many Title V grantees serving frontier areas must return unspent funds to the U.S. Department of Labor while turning away low-income older individuals in dire need of work experience and training. This bill will allow Title V funds allocated for frontier areas to be used as intended – to provide substantive community service and employment opportunities to those in need.

(4) Most Title V grantees serving frontier and predominantly rural areas are minimally funded yet have the same administrative responsibilities as all grantees. The higher cost of providing services due to long-distances, lack of public transportation, etc. is not considered in the current cost structure. This bill provides the needed cost structure flexibility.

(5) Financial Impact: This Bill is budget neutral and maintains existing funding to the states or Title V grantees.

(b) PURPOSE – It is the purpose of this Act to provide greater flexibility to adequately serve low-income older individuals residing within Frontier areas who are eligible for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V of the Older Americans Act).

SECTION. 3. FRONTIER SECTION.

Title V of the Older Americans Act is amended by creating a new “Frontier” section that contains the following:

(1) **FRONTIER DESIGNATION** - The chief executive officer of each state may designate, via the State Senior Employment Services Coordination Plan, those Planning and Service Areas having a majority of “frontier” counties. For states having 80% or more Planning and Service Areas designated as “Frontier”, the entire state shall be deemed “Frontier”.

(2) **DEFINITION of PLANNING AND SERVICE AREAS** – For the purpose of determining which counties constitute the Planning and Service Area(s) within a state, the definition at Section 3025 (a)(1)(E) of the Older Americans Act of 1965, *as amended* (Public Law 89-73) shall be used.

(3) **DEFINITION of FRONTIER** - For the purpose of determining which counties are “Frontier”, the consensus definition developed by The Frontier Education Center shall be used. This definition, which is updated after each decennial census with the involvement of each of the states, has been adopted by the Western Governors Association and the National Rural Health Association. The definition is based on a matrix that includes population density and distance in miles and travel time from a market service area.

All Planning and Service Areas in Alaska, Hawaii and the Trust Territories are deemed frontier in this definition

(4) **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY** - The current age at eligibility (55years of age) is retained. For purposes of income eligibility, the chief executive officer of each

state may amend the existing guidelines regarding income inclusions and exclusions based on the characteristics of frontier economies such as high and seasonal unemployment, transportation challenges, long distances from resources and training opportunities, etc.

Amended eligibility guidelines shall be designated in the State Senior Employment Services Coordination Plan. The eligibility guidelines shall be reviewed for appropriateness semi-annually by a committee consisting of representatives from the State Unit on Aging, the Governor's State Workforce Council, national grantees operating within the state and state sub-grantees.

In acknowledgement of the seasonal and agricultural nature of "Frontier" areas, individuals residing in "Frontier" areas may take occasional, short-term jobs and remain eligible for the Senior Community Services Employment Program so long as their income at application and recertification is at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty level.

(5) BUDGET FLEXIBILITY - Grantees serving frontier Planning and Service Areas shall be permitted "to budget no less than 50% of grant funds to pay wages and benefits for older individuals who are employed under this title".

Rationale:

The existing cap of "no less than" 75% on wages and fringe benefits", coupled with the 13.5% ceiling on administrative costs (which may be waived up to 15% under extenuating circumstances) leaves grantees with only between 10 – 11.5% of their allocated funds for training and supportive services. This does not adequately address the cost differential of providing services in frontier versus urban areas.

This flexibility is needed to use existing grant funds for transportation assistance, distance learning, computer training, occupational/skill training, salaries for staff providing programmatic services (front-line staff) and related types of participant support such as books, eye glasses, safety boots, etc.

DESIGNATION OF FRONTIER

Attachment B

Total Possible Points 105

Minimum Points Necessary for Frontier Designation = 50

"Extremes" = 55 -100

DENSITY PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE	POINTS
0-12	45
12.1-16	30
16.1-20	20
NOTE: PER COUNTY OR PER DEFINED SERVICE AREA WITH JUSTIFICATION	
TOTAL POINTS DENSITY	
DISTANCE IN MILES TO SERVICE/MARKET	POINTS
>90 Miles	30
60-90	20
30-60	10
<30	0
NOTE: STARTING POINT MUST BE RATIONAL, EITHER A SERVICE SITE OR PROPOSED SITE	
TOTAL POINTS DISTANCE IN MILES	
TIME IN MINUTES TO SERVICE/MARKET	POINTS
>90 Minutes	30
60-90	20
30-60	10
<30	0
NOTE: USUAL TIME; EXCEPTIONS MUST BE DOCUMENTED(ie; WEATHER, GEOGRAPHY, SEASONAL)	
TOTAL POINTS TIME IN MINUTES	
TOTAL POINTS ALL CATEGORIES	

Using the Matrix: The matrix is a tool for determining frontier status. It establishes a graphic mechanism for scoring population density and isolation/distance. An area receives points for ranges of population density and miles or minutes distant from a market. Using this method, any area which receives a minimum of 50 points will be considered frontier.

Ease of Implementation for State/Federal Program and Policy Officials:

One of the concerns expressed throughout the process of developing a tool for designation of frontier areas, was that it be simple to implement and administer for program and policy officials. The Frontier Education Center believes that it has accomplished this with the development of a three element matrix and a very simple scoring system.

Each element of the matrix is readily available and verifiable: population density by Census Bureau information and distance/time through maps.

LIST OF FRONTIER COUNTIES FROM 2000 U.S. CENSUS

This Table is excerpted from *List of Frontier Counties from 2000 U.S. Census*,
2002, Frontier Education Center, HCR 65, Box 126, Ojo Sarco, NM 87521.

Tel: (505) 820-6732.

Web site: <http://www.frontierus.org/index.htm?p=1&pid=6003>

	State	Number of Counties (Parishes, Boroughs) in State	Number of Frontier Counties in State
1	Alabama	67	3
2	Alaska	27	*
3	Arizona	15	13
4	Arkansas	75	21
5	California	58	15
6	Colorado	64	42
7	Connecticut	8	---
8	Delaware	3	---
9	Florida	67	3
10	Georgia	159	17
11	Hawaii	5	*
12	Idaho	44	26
13	Illinois	102	5
14	Indiana	92	---
15	Iowa	99	---
16	Kansas	105	56
17	Kentucky	120	2
18	Louisiana	64	1
19	Maine	16	5
20	Maryland	24	---
21	Massachusetts	14	---
22	Michigan	83	4
23	Minnesota	87	34
24	Mississippi	82	13
25	Missouri	115	7
26	Montana	56	50
27	Nebraska	93	58
28	Nevada	17	13
29	New Hampshire	10	1
30	New Jersey	21	---
31	New Mexico	33	26
32	New York	62	2
33	North Carolina	100	3
34	North Dakota	53	48

35	Ohio	88	---
36	Oklahoma	77	36
37	Oregon	36	11
38	Pennsylvania	67	4
39	Rhode Island	5	---
40	South Carolina	46	---
41	South Dakota	66	54
42	Tennessee	95	---
43	Texas	254	131
44	Utah	29	23
45	Vermont	14	1
46	Virginia	134	4
47	Washington	39	17
48	West Virginia	55	4
49	Wisconsin	72	14
50	Wyoming	23	21
	USA STATES Total	3,140	812
	U.S. Territories		
1	American Samoa		*
2	Guam		*
3	Northern Mariana Islands		*
4	Puerto Rico		*
5	U.S. Virgin Islands		*

*The Frontier Education Center supports the designation of Alaska, Hawaii, and the Trust Territories as frontier categories unto themselves.