



# COVID-19, NEVADA, WASHINGTON, & THE FUTURE OF AGING SERVICES

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# Introduction

- Before I start, I have to say I so wish this conference was being done live so I could have another chance to come to this great state
- My history with aging in Nevada goes all the way back to when I was a staffer with the House Committee on Aging and we did a field hearing in Henderson with then-Rep. Jim Santini sometime in the early 1980's
- And more recently, I recall a trip I took to Pahrump to visit the town's senior center as part of a project to examine the value of socialization in the Older Americans Act nutrition program

# By the Demographics

- Demographically speaking, Nevada is aging
- One in seven Nevadans is over 65
  - *Similar to national percentage*
- There's been a 57% increase of people in this age group over the last ten years
  - *As compared to only 35% nationally*
- Approximately 9.8% of older adults are below the poverty line
  - *Similar to national percentage*



# What's Going On?

- We are now in the 35<sup>th</sup> day of the Biden-Harris Administration
- A non-stop flurry of work from day 1
- The President identified 4 crises he must deal with the same time
  - *Pandemic*
  - *Economic collapse*
  - *Racial justice*
  - *Climate change*
- Obvious that individually and combined, they will consume way more than the first 100 days

# The Cabinet

- His Cabinet appointments are moving slowly
- Now, OMB head in trouble
- One of some concern is the new Secretary of HHS who has not yet been confirmed
- Also of great interest are several other appointments to run key offices in HHS
  - *Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to head CMS*
  - *Liz Fowler to run CMMI*
  - *A key appointment we await is who will run ACL*



# Congress at Work

- Congress too is hard at work
- Big change here—flip of Senate to Democratic control
  - *50-50 with VP Harris as tie-breaker, giving the Democrats control*
- Chuck Schumer vs. Mitch McConnell
- House remains under Democratic control, but much smaller margin

# The Committee Chairs

## Senate

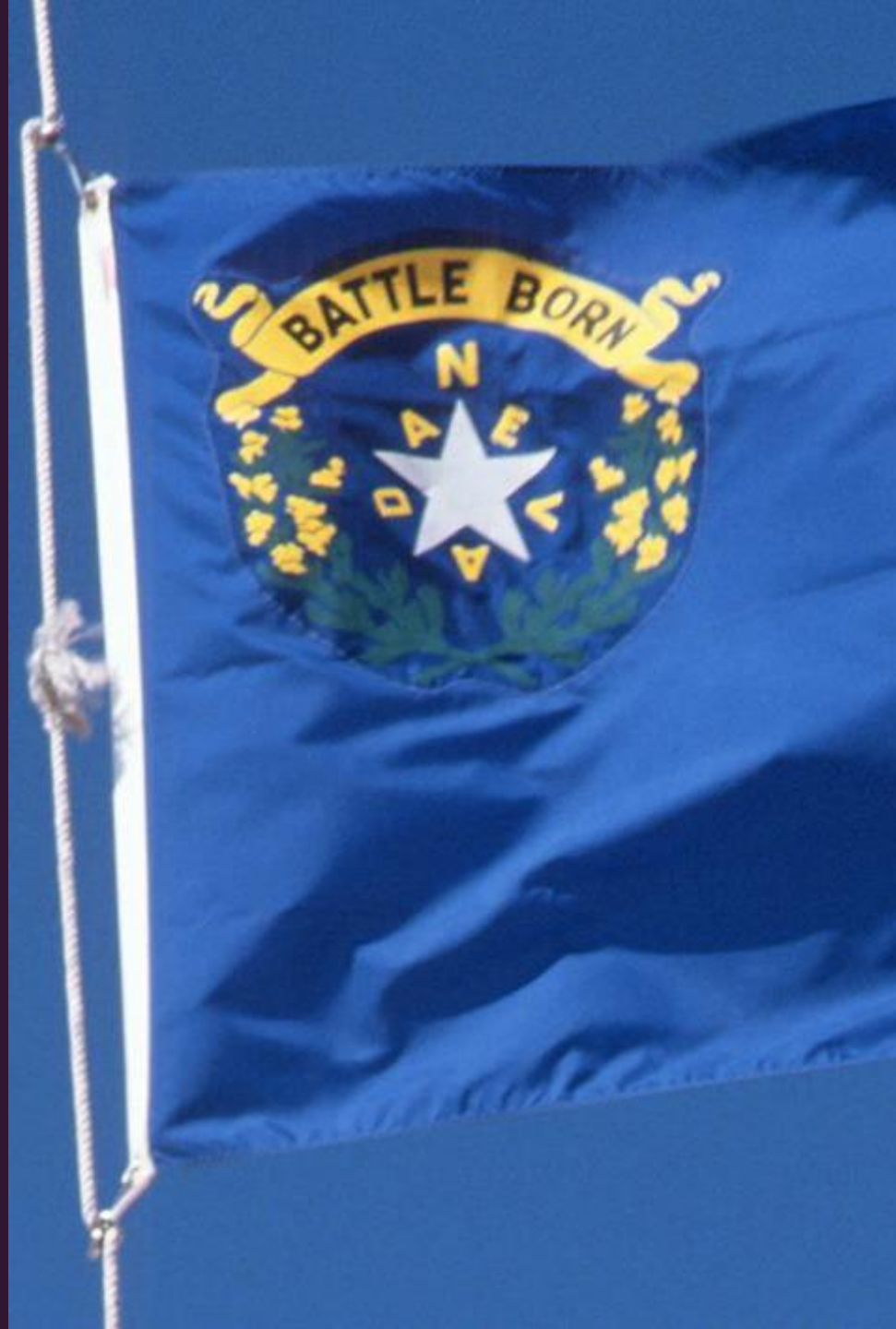
- Appropriations: Patrick Leahy (VT)
- Finance: Ron Wyden (OR)
- HELP: Patty Murray (WA)
- Agriculture: Debbie Stabenow (MI)
- Aging: Bob Casey (PA)

## House

- Appropriations: Rosa DeLauro (CT)
- Ways and Means: Richard Neal (MA)
- Energy and Commerce: Frank Pallone (NJ)
- Agriculture: David Scott (GA)

# The Nevada Delegation

- Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto on Finance
- Sen. Jacky Rosen on HELP and Aging
- Rep. Dina Titus (dean of the delegation) on Transportation and Infrastructure – the next big initiative of the Biden Administration
- Rep. Mark Amodei on Appropriations
- Rep. Suzie Lee on Education and Labor – and on subcommittee overseeing the OAA
- Rep. Steven Horsford on Budget, Ways and Means





# The American Rescue Plan

- A critically important \$1.9 trillion plan to continue to address the health care and economic crisis that the pandemic has caused
- The House is expected to pass the bill this week
- Senate to follow quickly thereafter
- A March 14 deadline lurks—when a number of unemployment benefit programs are due to expire
- To facilitate quick passage, Congress is using reconciliation
  - *Essentially means passing the bill in Senate and needing only 51 votes*

# Good News (So Far) for Aging Programs

- \$1.444 billion for Older Americans Act programs!
  - \$750 million for Title III-C nutrition
  - \$470 million for Title III-B supportive services, including vaccine-related services and social isolation
  - \$145 million for Title III-E caregiver support services
  - \$44 million for Title III-D preventive health services
  - \$25 million for Title VI A/C (nutrition, supportive services, caregiver services)
  - \$10 million for Title VII long term care ombudsmen
- \$276 million (\$88 million in FY21 and \$188 million in FY22) for adult protective services and other elder justice activities



# Good News for Other Programs Too

- State and local relief - \$219.8 billion
- Unemployment coverage extended through August 29 and increased to \$400 extra/week
- Continues the 15% increase in SNAP benefits through September 30, 2021
- Technical assistance and technology for SNAP online purchasing - \$25 million

# Big Issues Still to Resolve...

- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15
- How much state and local government aid to provide
- Stimulus checks—how big and to whom?
- And the overall \$1.9 trillion price tag

# What Follows? The Three “I”s

- Infrastructure
- Immigration
- Investigations



# Looking Ahead (And Don't We All Want To?)

- Several months ago, an article in the NY Times coined a phrase I like so much more than “the new normal” or “life after the pandemic subsides”
- It was the **Big Reset**
- This pandemic has shown you here in Nevada and across the nation how quickly things can change if they must
- So, in moving forward, what will be some elements of the Big Reset in aging services?

# The Big Reset in Aging: Social Isolation and Older Adults

- How much worse did it get with the pandemic? What are the solutions we can look to?
- Social isolation should be officially designated a public health emergency
  - *The Stein Institute for Research at UCSD notes social isolation increases the odds of mortality by 30%*
  - *The related consequence of loneliness causes more than 162,000 deaths a year*
- We could then better coordinate existing resources and secure new ones
- We need an inventory of existing federal programs which do their part to prevent social isolation
- We must also ensure further solutions are cognizant of needs related to equity in programs and services

# The Big Reset: Social Isolation (cont.)

- Front and center: the pre-pandemic OAA congregate nutrition program
- We all know this program was more than just about a meal
- It was about socialization and comradery
- We did a three-year study by NANASP on this funded by RRF
- Main finding: almost everyone's main reason for attending congregate programs was for **socialization**





# The Big Reset: Social Determinants of Health

- These have played a big role in this pandemic
- Those with underlying issues related to SDOH were more likely to contract COVID
  - *Factors such as inadequate housing, lack of transportation, lack of access to food and nutrition*
  - *And poverty in general is the biggest social determinant of them all*
- Also, the lack of a social network – a contributing factor to a growing problem facing older adults—homelessness

# The Big Reset: SDOH (cont.)

- Here again we need to identify and then invest in those existing federal programs which can help, such as
  - *SNAP*
  - *Section 202 Housing*
  - *OAA programs*
  - *HUD rental assistance*
  - *Lifeline subsidies*
  - *And many more*



# The Big Reset: More HCBS

- Long a preference of older adults and their families
- Medicaid has achieved a full rebalance—more spent on HCBS than institutional care, but... now a waiting list of more than 700,000
- Biden wants the lists eliminated
- Do that, invest more in the OAA and continue the expansion of non-medical supplemental services under Medicare Advantage
  - *And let's not forget fee for service Medicare too*

# The Big Reset: Boomers

- Big topic: Medicare for all? Or Medicare for more?
- Partially driving this issue: the boomers
  - *Oldest boomer is now 75 and the youngest is now 57*
- New focus on lowering Medicare age to at least 60—the most likely scenario
- Example of the impact of boomers on Medicare
- Another is the growth in preventive benefits—more since boomers turned 65 ten years ago than in previous 40+ years of Medicare

# The Big Reset: Telehealth

- Use of telehealth exploded in pandemic
- Studies show older adults were using it more even before pandemic
- The expansions are temporary; some need to be made permanent
- Especially those used most by older adults
- Legislation will be proposed to make permanent
- At same time, access issues are still a huge problem



# The Big Reset: Nursing Homes

- Pandemic exposed tragic issues in nursing homes
- While only 5 percent of US cases have occurred in nursing homes (1.3 million), they represent 34 percent of the country's pandemic fatalities
- Much of what occurred could have been prevented
- Need a reset around ensuring quality of care
  - *Adequate staffing*
  - *Infection control*
  - *Prompt reporting of abuse*
- Role of private equity in nursing homes
- And new smaller nursing homes in the future

# The Big Reset: Elder Justice

- Too long overlooked
- One in ten over age 65 are elder abuse victims
- Billions lost to financial abuse alone
- Self-neglect on the rise as more older adults live alone
- And two recent issues
  - *Vaccine related scams*
  - *And hate crimes and elder abuse against Asian Americans*
- Need a redoubling of our commitment to fight all forms of elder abuse

# The Big Reset: Elder Justice (cont.)

- Important step in right direction
- \$100 million provided for elder justice in December for adult protective services
- More money expected to flow from American Rescue Plan
- Need to reauthorize the Elder Justice Act and put more resources into prevention of race or ethnic based violence and abuse
- Biden-Harris campaign endorsed renewing the EJA



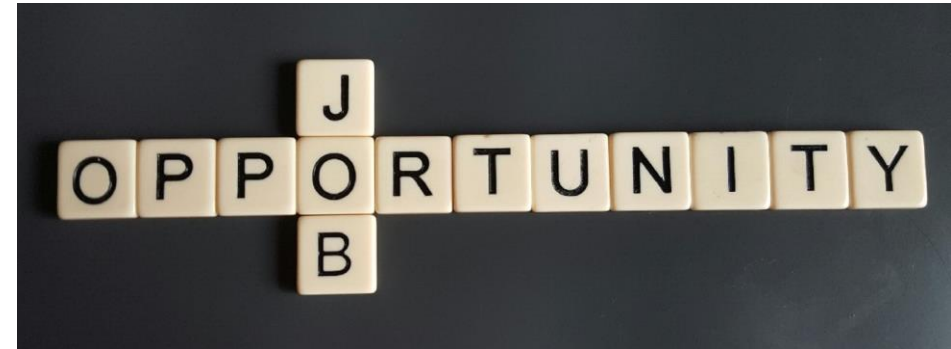


# The Big Reset: Nutrition Is Health

- Time to break down program and funding silos
- Good nutrition is key to good health
  - *Major chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease can be prevented or alleviated with proper nutrition*
- Pandemic has doubled the number of food insecure
- Need a national policy for nutrition security as a tool for health promotion
  - *Stronger investment in existing nutrition programs*
  - *Redouble efforts to combat older adult malnutrition*

# The Big Reset: Employment

- Before the pandemic more older adults were working, especially women
- 10 million jobs lost so far in pandemic
  - *Older workers take longer to get jobs back*
- Need targeted workforce development programs for older workers
- Need more flex jobs for older workers
- In pandemic, calls were made for retired health care personnel to help
  - *Experience is a skill*



# The Big Reset: Economic Security

- Pandemic will force a new look at economic security for older adults, beginning with Social Security
- For about 50% of older adults, it provides at least 50% of their income, and for about 25% of older adults, it provides at least 90% of their income
- Growing concern about 2021 Trustees report and what it will show
  - *10 million jobs lost—the contributors*
  - *5.2 million enrolled—the beneficiaries*
- Not sustainable without reforms
  - *Need to ensure reforms make Social Security stronger for low-income beneficiaries*
  - *Can ask those with means to pay more as in Medicare*

# The Big Reset: Promoting Equity

- Need to ensure programs and services for older adults promote equity in how they are developed and operated
- Medicaid may be most important lever to helping to achieve health equity
  - *Always about the underserved but now reaching middle class too*
  - *Need to invest in outreach to get those who have been missed*
- In equity discussions, older adults are distinct
  - *They can be victims of double and triple jeopardy*
  - *Racism, sexism, ableism, and of course ageism*
  - *And have been victims longer*
- Equity must include a proper focus on older adults

# The Big Reset: Engaging With Aging



- Your theme may hold one of the keys of the future
- Seeing older adults as the resource they are
- Seeing experience and wisdom as empowerment tools
- Recognizing that older adults care about all issues, whether for themselves, their children, their grandchildren
  - *Involving and activating them on issues like climate change, quality education, workforce of the future, and so on*

# The Big Reset: Engaging With Aging

- Engaging with aging, pure and simple, is
  - *Sensible*
  - *Sensitive*
  - *Strategic*
  - *And above all, smart*
- So, let's do it!



# Questions? More Information?



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