

For Immediate Release  
December 21, 2012  
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## **NAELA Calls on Congress to Refrain From Cutting Vital Programs for Older and Disabled Americans**

**Washington, D.C.** – “Balancing the budget on the backs of victims of elder abuse is simply wrong in a society as affluent as the United States,” said Amos Goodall, the Chair of [NAELA](#)'s Public Policy Committee and an Elder Law attorney in Pennsylvania. “Elder Law attorneys often see the elderly and individuals with disabilities who have become victims of abuse or fraud, and the number of these cases is growing. Now is not the time to cut programs that provide services to prevent these crimes and help protect victims.”

Last night, Speaker Boehner withdrew his “Plan B” proposal (HJ Res 66) that would extend current tax cuts for those making \$1 million or less, but the House passed the Spending Reduction Act of 2012 (HR 6684) by a vote of 215 to 209. The Spending Reduction Act of 2012 replaces the sequester for one year with other spending cuts, including cutting older Americans’ protections from elder abuse. The proposal calls for the repeal of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), a flexible funding source that allows states to meet the needs of their most vulnerable populations, including children and low-income elderly and disabled Americans. These grants provide vital funds for Adult Protective Services and support community-based care for the elderly and disabled.

Charlie Sabatino, a past president of NAELA and Director of the ABA Commission on Law and Aging, pointed out that “Many in Congress don’t realize the impact that SSBG funding has back in their states and districts. For example, Adult Protective Services programs are a lifeline for abused and neglected elders and funded by SSBG. While the incidence of elder abuse is increasing, elders will be left to fend for themselves if SSBG is eliminated.”

Almost 41 percent of SSBG expenditures are allocated for disability services and services for vulnerable and elderly adults. States are in no position to finance these programs on their own and the elderly and disabled will lose access to these critical services and protections. Ending these programs will expose older Americans to abuse and exploitation and could force them into more expensive nursing homes as the SSBG provides services that help keep older Americans in their homes and communities.

NAELA’s Public Policy Advisor, Brian Lindberg, stated that “For more than eight years

NAELA, as a founding member of the Elder Justice Coalition, fought for passage of the Elder Justice Act, which expands services to victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Now one of the same programs that the EJA expands, Adult Protective Services, is in peril. The House voted to eliminate the Adult Protective Services core funding under the SSBG program before they have provided the additional funds that are authorized by the EJA and are so desperately needed.”

In addition to repealing SSBG, the Republican proposal calls for the elimination of many of the Affordable Care Act provisions, including maintenance of effort requirements for Medicaid and mandatory funding to states to establish health benefit exchanges. HR 6684 shields defense programs from the sequester while continuing to subject non-defense discretionary programs, such as health care and nutrition programs, to extensive funding cuts.

NAELA calls on the Senate and the President to reject this legislation. A deficit reduction plan cannot endanger the safety and health of America’s most vulnerable populations.

### **About NAELA**

Members of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) are attorneys who are experienced and trained in working with the legal problems of aging Americans and individuals of all ages with disabilities. Established in 1987, NAELA is a non-profit association that assists lawyers, bar organizations, and others. The mission of NAELA is to establish NAELA members as the premier providers of legal advocacy, guidance, and services to enhance the lives of people with special needs and people as they age. NAELA currently has members across the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. For more information, visit [NAELA.org](http://NAELA.org).