

**Justice for All:
Ending Elder Abuse, Neglect and Financial Exploitation**

Good Afternoon. I would like to thank our witnesses and welcome everyone attending today's hearing.

It is very easy to lose sight of problems that aren't right in front of us every day. However, today, we are going to focus on a problem that doesn't often get the attention it deserves: elder abuse. To those victims of abuse, there is no bigger problem in the world. To the rest of us charged with stopping it, it should be a priority. The physical, mental and financial abuse of our nation's seniors is all too common. In 2009 in Wisconsin, over 5,000 cases of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation were reported – this was a 9 percent increase over 2008. These crimes are being committed by people because their victims are often fragile and their chance of getting caught is slim.

We must find solutions and then take action. To begin, we must ensure that federal, state and local agencies work cohesively to combat elder abuse. To do so, I'm asking Congress to enact a series of commonsense legislation. Today we will reintroduce the "Elder Abuse Victims Act," with a strong endorsement from the Elder Justice Coalition. The bill will establish a first ever, Office of Elder Justice within the Justice Department that will protect America's seniors by strengthening law enforcement's response to elder abuse. Additionally, I will introduce, the "End Abuse in Later Life Act," and am an original co-sponsor of the "Senior Financial Empowerment Act". While no legislation can end all exploitation, we must do everything in our power to help those victims that come forward asking for help.

We will start today's hearing with a legendary performer and World War II veteran, Mr. Mickey Rooney, who has come here today to bravely share his personal story of abuse.

We will then review the findings of a Government Accountability report, which shows that our federal response to elder abuse is lacking. We will also hear testimony from the National Adult Protective Services Association, and new information about the prevalence of elder abuse in the state of New York. Finally, our panelists from the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Life Long Justice will share their knowledge of abuse in later life and highlight the need for leadership and coordinated response.

It is our hope that today's hearing will inspire others who find themselves in situations where they are being exploited to ask for help. We will hear Mr. Rooney's story, we will hear more from our experts, but they are only the smallest fraction of the heartbreaking stories too many older Americans are living through right now.

For those of us on the dais, I know our witnesses will challenge us not to forget this issue when we leave here today. I hope we meet their challenge.