

**Testimony of Jan L. Jones**  
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**Presented to**  
**The Special Committee on Aging**  
**United States Senate**

**"The Corporate Response to Senior Hunger"**

**March 5, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Special Committee on Aging, I am Jan Jones, Senior Vice President of Communications and Government Relations for Harrah's Entertainment, Inc. Harrah's is the world's largest provider of casino entertainment, and is also the primary corporate sponsor, through the Harrah's Foundation, of the Meals on Wheels Association of America, or MOWAA. MOWAA represents local community-based meal programs from every state that provide congregate and home-delivered meals and other nutrition to older persons in need. It is the largest and oldest national organization representing senior meal programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Special Committee. I am proud of the work Harrah's has helped MOWAA accomplish over the last six years. I would like to highlight that work today, paying particular attention to the comprehensive, data-rich analysis of senior hunger in America about which Dr. Ziliak testified earlier. I will also discuss Harrah's support for MOWAA in the context of a critically needed, comprehensive response by corporate America to the problem of senior hunger.

The Harrah's Foundation, a private foundation established to financially support qualified organizations in the communities in which we operate, provided funding for the senior hunger study. Why did the Foundation decide the study both was necessary and merited our support? Comprehensive, data-rich scholarly analyses are not the kinds of things corporate foundations tend to fund or become particularly excited about. There is no plaque attached to the wing of a building, no ribbon cutting, and opportunities for visuals generally are less than splashy. But we felt a comprehensive, up-to-date study of senior hunger in America -- its causes, consequences, and future -- was a very worthy endeavor, one quite in keeping with our corporate ethos.

Harrah's business is governed by what we call our Code of Commitment. Established in 2000, the Code of Commitment was the casino industry's first articulation of corporate social responsibility standards. The Code defines who we are, and what we stand for. It is a public pledge to our guests, employees, and communities that we will honor the trust they have placed in us.

To our guests, we commit to promoting responsible gaming. Harrah's was the first casino to recognize and operationally address problem gambling, and in the promotion of responsible gaming we continue to lead the industry. To our employees, we commit to treating them with respect and providing opportunities for satisfying careers. For example, we encourage professional and personal growth through tuition reimbursement, on the job training, and promotion from within.

But it is our commitment to our home communities that is most relevant to the discussion today, and which explains our support for the senior hunger research. The Code commits Harrah's to making our home communities more vibrant

places to live and work. Our commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development in our home communities is exemplified by our membership in EPA's Climate Leaders partnership, and by the aggressive conservation and recycling programs we have in place across the country. Our commitment to our communities is demonstrated by our employees' volunteering more than 150,000 hours each year to community causes.

And our commitment to communities explains our enthusiastic and generous corporate philanthropy. In 2007, *BusinessWeek* placed Harrah's Entertainment among the top corporate donors in the country, ranking the company the "most generous cash giver" as a percentage of pre-tax profits among Standard & Poor's 500-stock index companies. The gift to MOWAA that funded the senior research was a small but important example of our Code of Commitment in action, responding to a critical need in our home communities.

Even before the research was commissioned, we had a sense of the magnitude of senior hunger in the United States. Hundreds of our employees bring our Code of Commitment to life by delivering meals to needy seniors on a regular basis. These employees have first hand knowledge that America's greatest generation sometimes goes hungry. Multiplying these employees' experiences across our country unmask and gives scope to a problem that has been hidden. And we knew from working with MOWAA that at least forty percent of home-delivered meal programs have waiting lists, suggesting an enormous unmet need for these services across the country.

Yes, the research supported by the Harrah's Foundation and sponsored by MOWAA provides up-to-date figures on the scope of senior hunger in the United States. We are pleased that the study makes this contribution, for a better understanding of the magnitude of the problem should lead to a better understanding of the public and private resources that should be dedicated to it.

But what excites us most about the senior hunger research is that it will help in the development and implementation of targeted, fact-based interventions. These interventions will increase the effectiveness of both private sector and public sector efforts to reduce senior hunger. The research fills a need in the literature, and in the public policy arena, for documentation not only of senior hunger in the aggregate, but also of risk profiles that demonstrate the diversity of experiences with food insecurity and hunger among America's seniors. And as the researchers point out, some of these risk factors are counter-intuitive. The research will help MOWAA realize its vision of no senior going hungry in this great nation. And it will help improve the effectiveness of Harrah's future contributions to MOWAA, and the effectiveness of other corporations that, like Harrah's, decide that ending senior hunger is a moral and philanthropic imperative.

The senior hunger research also excites us because we believe it can energize corporate America to recognize this imperative. The mission to end senior hunger depends as much on strong and effective leadership in corporations, government, and communities all across the country as it does on identifying new financial and other resources to meet the growing needs. Senior meal programs that receive funding through the Older Americans Act, for example, are public-private partnerships that reflect the unique needs and characteristics of the communities in which they operate and that rely on a number of funding sources. Federal dollars are only a portion of the funds on which these programs rely. So the need for increased corporate engagement in the issue of senior hunger could not be clearer.

MOWAA has recognized the crucial role of the private sector through the development of its Corporate Response to Senior Hunger, a key part of the National Center for Nutrition Leadership. The Corporate Response to Senior Hunger is designed to harness the resources of America's corporate community in a joint effort to identify its role and to expand its commitment in the battle to eliminate hunger and malnutrition among our nation's elderly.

I challenge my colleagues in corporate America to join Harrah's by taking a leadership role in the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger. Together, we can help by making food products more readily available to meal providers, encouraging improvements to the meal delivery system, offering skills and experience to provider staff, and advocating for them before policymakers. Corporate participants will become hands-on resources for meal providers. They will bring together their resources and skills in a collective effort to find solutions, to leverage private sector knowledge and efficiencies, and encourage voluntary efforts to end senior hunger.

Let me explain the three major components of MOWAA's vision for the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger in more detail.

The first component of the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger is to challenge the corporate community to become engaged in the fight against senior hunger. In this richest country in the world, many corporations want to make a difference. However, for a variety of reasons, they often do not know how to help. The Corporate Response to Senior Hunger seeks to bridge this knowledge gap. We are working to identify key business leaders who share the commitment to ending senior hunger and engaging their corporations in this effort. Some of these individuals are already assembled through their service on the MOWAA Foundation board of directors. More leaders are needed.

Through the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger, America's corporations can and will help. Writing a check is one solution, but the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger believes that it is as important for America's business leaders to find ways to:

- effectively transfer surplus food produced by American manufacturers to senior meal programs in ways that are usable by them;
- encourage meal providers to enter into existing purchasing programs to enable them to buy their food more efficiently;
- offer leadership and mentoring to identify ways to educate meal providers about purchasing, running businesses, and efficiencies in operations and distribution;
- work effectively in partnership with meal providers and their national associations to identify solutions and create systems that work best for them in the collective mission to end senior hunger; and,
- increase awareness about the nutrition needs of America's seniors and the issue of hunger among the elderly in this country.

A second component of the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger is assisting Meals On Wheels providers. America's senior population will double in the next twenty-five years. Even now, however, there are not enough governmental and private sector resources to address the needs of today's seniors desiring nutritional assistance. As I indicated previously, 40% of Meals On Wheels programs have waiting lists of seniors who need meals but cannot get them. As the population increases, these waiting lists are likely to grow, and without help and incentives, the current system of getting meals to homebound and other seniors in need will not be able to meet the demand.

Senior meal providers do an extraordinary job with the limited resources they have; they are on the line every day fighting to help seniors in need and to save lives. But when it comes to business acumen and entrepreneurship, many could use help. That is another area where America's private sector can offer leadership -- by developing public-private partnerships that help meal program staff think and act more like good businesspeople.

The third and final component of the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger is to develop public awareness of the issue of senior hunger. Beyond traditional press releases and news events, the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger hopes to inspire corporate leaders to engage leaders in the media through editorial board meetings, meetings with news producers, discussions with academics and think tanks, and related activities. In conjunction with creating public awareness, the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger will also be highlighting the specific corporate initiatives of its members.

I would also like to place our support for MOWAA's work in the context of our broader philanthropic efforts addressing the needs of seniors. As I indicated, the Harrah's Foundation provided financial support for the senior hunger study. Created in 2002, the Foundation is funded by Harrah's properties and supports reinvestment programs where our employees live and work. Since its formation, the Harrah's Foundation has committed more than \$60 million to non-profit

organizations worldwide. The Harrah's Foundation focuses the majority of its funding in three categories: senior citizens, education initiatives, and civic programs.

Seniors are a focus of our philanthropic giving because, frankly, the needs of our growing senior population have too often been ignored by corporate America. Senior hunger, health care, and broader well-being are also issues about which I became acutely aware as mayor of Las Vegas from 1991 to 1999. Helping my city's growing population of seniors cope with health care, transportation, and myriad other needs gave me personal insight into the profound challenges our seniors face, and into government's limited capacity to meet these challenges. So when I sat down with the other founding members of our Foundation's Board of Trustees to establish our giving priorities, I understood and strongly advocated a primary focus on the needs of our seniors. This focus has been the shared vision of the Foundation's Trustees since the Foundation's inception.

Our most prominent support for seniors, a set of initiatives that I believe are doing great work and which have truly energized our employees and our home communities, has unfolded through the Meals on Wheels Association of America. Since 2002, the Harrah's Foundation has been the single largest sponsor of MOWAA, having provided more than \$4.5 million to support the organization's broad range of vital services, and having donated 30 vehicles to Meals On Wheels programs across America. This fleet has driven more than 900,000 miles to deliver more than 2.5 million meals to homebound seniors in the past five years. Harrah's donations have directly resulted in the elimination and reduction of waiting lists at supported affiliates. The truck donations and the generated publicity have allowed Meals On Wheels member programs to receive additional grants and private funding. In addition, every agency has reported an increase in calls regarding volunteer opportunities and how loved ones can participate in the program.

Additionally, several Harrah's properties participate in the annual "Mayors For Meals" event, benefiting MOWAA member programs by raising funds and recruiting volunteers. Harrah's properties also continue to provide additional funding, in-kind donations and volunteer support to local MOWAA programs throughout the year.

Some of our other notable activities addressing the needs of seniors include our support for the Alzheimer's Association. In 2004, the Harrah's Foundation funded a five-year, \$3 million grant to the Association, becoming one of only two companies recognized by the organization as a strategic alliance sponsor. The Alzheimer's Association has used the grant to sponsor consumer education campaigns, support leadership and fund service-enhancement programs at local chapters nationwide. In 2007, the Alzheimer's Association observed its first World Alzheimer's Day to increase awareness of the disease and to assist in raising funds for much-needed research and services. The Harrah's Foundation

was the prime national sponsor of the event, pledging a matching grant of up to \$1 million for funds raised in conjunction with World Alzheimer's Day. The event was a tremendous success, raising nearly \$2 million for Alzheimer's care, support and research.

Our support for seniors extends beyond our nation's borders, as our company has a growing presence in the worldwide market for casino entertainment. For example, in 2007, the Harrah's Foundation awarded a five-year gift of \$600,000 to Help the Aged, the leading charity supporting seniors in the United Kingdom. The funding provides two vans per year in support of Help the Aged's most vital projects – the HandyVan and SeniorMobility programs. The HandyVan program is a free service enabling seniors to live safely and independently in their own homes by providing reliable safety and security inspections and products. The SeniorMobility Van program works with community groups throughout the UK to provide transportation solutions for seniors that allow them to continue living independent lives.

Back stateside, the Harrah's Foundation provided a \$1 million grant to WGBH, the public broadcasting station based in Boston, for the production of the documentary "Caring For Your Parents." The two-hour broadcast, featuring a 90-minute documentary followed by a 30-minute panel discussion, is designed to increase awareness of aging in our society and its effects on our communities, and provide information on available support services. The program will target baby boomers facing the challenge of caring for elderly parents and loved ones, and is scheduled to air on April 2, 2008 on more than 350 PBS affiliates across the United States.

We're proud of our efforts on behalf of America's seniors, and in particular we are proud of our association with MOWAA, but the hard work to address senior hunger has only begun. The research discussed today on the causes, consequences, and future of senior hunger in America is a call to action. It is a call to action for all Americans. And it is in no small measure a call to action for corporate America. The need is clear. The need is documented. The need is critical. I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for helping to bring senior hunger to the attention of the American people. I also thank you for allowing me to explain the Corporate Response to Senior Hunger, and to challenge corporate America to embrace its important role in ensuring that no senior goes hungry.