

Opening Statement of Senator Herb Kohl - Special Committee on Aging Hearing  
Innovation in the Aging Network – The Future of Social Services for Older Americans  
May 3, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today's hearing is a fitting topic for Older Americans Month.

We face an unprecedented tsunami of retirees. In 2011, the oldest of the approximately 77 million Baby Boomers will turn 65, and by 2024, all Boomers will be over the age of 60. They are the largest, healthiest, most energetic and best educated generation in history.

The Boomers are certain to redefine aging. And our nation's "aging network" – the people and organizations who provide support for seniors – must redefine themselves too.

Boomers expect to make positive contributions to the nation and their communities. Many would like to continue working, either to stay active and productive or to save for a more secure retirement. That is why I introduced the Older Worker Opportunity Act, which makes it easier for older workers to stay on the job and continue to provide expertise to our nation's businesses.

Other Boomers will look to mix work and leisure with community service. Older Americans bring a wealth of talent and experience to their communities, and many are eager to make a meaningful contribution. We look forward to hearing today about innovative ways Boomers are engaging in the community issues, and how the aging network is adapting to these new volunteers.

Whether working, volunteering, or just relaxing, many of the coming retirees will rely on some services provided through the Older Americans Act. Scheduled for reauthorization this year, the OAA provides important services for seniors, including Meals on Wheels, elder abuse prevention, and caregiver support. The reauthorization will occur at the same time OAA programs are weakened by chronic under funding – a trend the President's budget would continue. The budget proposal actually cuts OAA programs at the Administration on Aging by \$28 million.

Older Americans Month is an excellent time to plan ahead for the changes the retiring Boomers will bring. Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.