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**AARP Statement on President's Deficit Reduction Plan:
Reject Proposals that Cut Medicare Benefits and Shift Health Care Costs
onto Seniors**

Organization Agrees that Social Security Should be Kept off the Table

WASHINGTON—AARP Executive Vice President Nancy LeMond offered the following statement after the President released his plan for deficit reduction, elements of which may be considered by the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction over the next two months:

“AARP reiterates its strong opposition to any proposals that would raise costs or cut the hard earned Medicare benefits that millions of seniors depend upon every day for their health and retirement security. Our members believe that Congress and the President must address the nation’s long-term fiscal challenges, but that our elected leaders can make responsible decisions that do not hurt seniors, raise their out of pocket costs or cut the benefits they have earned over a lifetime of hard work.

“AARP urges Congress to first cut waste and close tax loopholes instead of taking away the benefits Americans have earned after decades of working hard and paying into the system. The President and Congress should be thinking of ways to restore middle class prosperity, not weaken it through cuts to benefits. It is neither balanced nor fair to ask seniors, whose incomes average less than \$20,000, to contribute even more for their health care.

“We appreciate that the President has heard the voices of the millions of AARP members and other older Americans who have been urging elected officials in Washington not to include cuts to Social Security in any deficit reduction deal. Social Security is separately funded by workers who have paid into the program over a lifetime of hard work. Social Security did not cause the current deficit, so the hard-earned benefits of millions of Americans should not be cut to reduce it. We will continue to urge all Washington policymakers to reject any proposals that would cut benefits, including any reduction to the cost of living adjustment (COLA) which would result in a significant reduction of benefits for today’s seniors, as well as younger workers in the future.

“As we thoroughly review the President’s plan in the coming days, we remain concerned about

proposals that could impose arbitrary, harmful cuts to the Medicare program or shift additional costs onto Medicare beneficiaries. We urge the Administration and Congress to reject any health care proposals that would cut seniors benefits, raise out of pocket costs, and threaten long-term care services for millions of older Americans and persons with disabilities. If we are serious about lowering health care costs, we cannot simply focus on Medicare and Medicaid for savings. Rather, we must improve the delivery of health care generally, including better coordination of care, lowering the cost of prescription drugs and reducing waste and fraud throughout the entire health care system.

“We are pleased that the President has taken raising the eligibility age in Medicare off the table. AARP opposes raising the eligibility age in Medicare because it would eliminate access to Medicare benefits for younger retirees and dramatically increase their costs. It would also raise costs for seniors who continue to get coverage through Medicare program, and it would do nothing to address waste and reduce costs in the health care system. Younger retirees would need to pay more out of pocket for insurance on the individual market. The proposal would raise premium costs for those remaining in Medicare program by removing younger and healthier enrollees from the program.

“In today’s difficult economy—with a loss of retirement savings and home equity, coupled with rising health care costs and high unemployment rates particularly for older workers—cuts to seniors’ benefits would undermine the standard of living for middle class Americans today and for future generations. Washington needs to stop viewing Medicare and Social Security simply as line items in the federal budget and stop targeting the pocketbooks of America’s seniors who typically live on less than \$20,000 per year and already pay nearly 20% of their income out of pocket for health care costs.

“AARP will continue to raise the voices of millions of Americans who rely on Medicare and Social Security benefits and others who oppose benefit cuts for deficit reduction. Instead of targeting seniors’ hard-earned benefits, the President and Congress should work together to strengthen Medicare and Social Security.”

For more information, please contact AARP Media Relations at (202) 434-2560 or visit www.aarp.org/protectseniors.

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