Sample letters to the Editor

**Elderly Waiver Should be a Funding Priority**

In a mere seven years, we will have more citizens in Minnesota that are over the age of 65 then we will have school-aged children. Therefore, seniors and their caregivers need to be a top priority looking forward in Minnesota's future. One of the programs that helps support this population is called the Elderly Waiver program. The Elderly Waiver program (EW) funds home and community based services for individuals that are over the age of 65. The individuals that this program covers are currently eligible for Medical Assistance but instead choose to reside in their community instead of a nursing home or other institutional setting. EW also provides seniors with various care options that without the program's support would not be available. Currently the program serves a total of 22,358 individuals. The program is very cost efficient as it has the ability to service three seniors on an Elderly Waiver for every one senior residing in a nursing home facility. In addition to its cost effectiveness, Minnesotans support this program. 85% of Minnesotans are in favor of increasing funding for in-home and community based programs in order to allow our seniors to stay independent for a longer period of time. Minnesota legislators and the Governor should provide a 5 percent rate increase for home and community based services this year. It is the smart thing to do—for our seniors and for our state budget.

**Senior Service Jobs Are Available but Positions Are Still Vacant**

In one nursing home in the state of Minnesota, the facility is looking to lay away ten available beds. This means that they will turn away ten potential elderly residents in the future. Why would they do away with ten beds? It is not because of lack of needing residents – as Minnesota’s aging population continues to grow – but rather that senior care services cannot find enough staff to meet the needs of ten residents. Currently there are almost 1,500 job vacancies in Minnesota Care Centers in only three positions – RN's LPNs and Nursing Assistants. However, we need these workers because in a mere seven years Minnesota will have more senior individuals then school-aged children. Therefore, by the time the year 2020 hits, direct workers in senior services will be the largest needed occupation group in the United States. The reason that these positions have not been filled is simple: the wages given to these positions are not high enough. For example, in today's workforce registered nurses that are working in care centers make 17.07 dollars/hour or 35,505 dollars a year less than a registered nurse in hospital setting. Additionally, nursing assistants in nursing homes make 5.58 dollars/hour or 11,606 dollars a year less than their counterparts in the hospital settings. Without more funding for senior services, these facilities will face more vacant positions in the long term. Therefore, seniors and their caregivers need to be a bigger priority in this legislative session.