

For Immediate Release  
Monday, January 11, 2010

Contact: David Irwin

## IDAHO STATE OF THE STATE HOLDS PROMISE & PROBLEMS

AARP Urges Legislators Not to Balance Budget on Backs of Elderly & Work to Tackle Idaho's Worsening Health Care Crisis

Statement by Jim Wordelman  
AARP State Director for Idaho

BOISE, Idaho – Today in his State of the State, Governor Otter laid out a broad road map for Idaho in the coming year – the address held both promise and problems.

The Governor's commitment of bring more doctors to Idaho to perform their residencies is a move in the right direction. Idaho has one of the lowest patient-to-physician ratios in the nation, especially for Medicare beneficiaries; today's announcement will help people across the state have better access to needed medical care.

AARP also commends the Governor for his budget recommendations of:

- \* \$250,000 to complete the Northern Idaho Aged and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and for his commitment to expanding the project statewide to help Idahoans have a better long-term care system.

- \* \$38 million in new Medicaid funds and \$71 million in Federal Medical Assistance Percentage, to help Idahoans, young and old, who've fallen on hard times, continue to have needed access to health care.

Budget cuts and holdbacks must not be unduly harsh and must be implemented responsibly and ensure that a no-growth budget does not mean a no-conscience budget. Many older Idahoans and families across the state have been forced to turn to programs and services for the basics like health care, access to prescription drugs and for the ability to remain in their homes and communities with dignity and avoid costly nursing home care. AARP urges Governor Otter and the Legislature to ensure this budget is not balanced on the backs of Idaho families and its frail elderly.

Idaho's looming health care crisis hit home for hundreds of thousands of people across the state in 2009, and will only get worse in 2010 if it's left unaddressed. For the uninsured, those who've lost jobs and families struggling to keep pace as premiums rise and wages don't, high health insurance premiums (expected to double in the next few years) and soaring prescription drug costs (already seeing 9% increases since last year) continue to wreak havoc on household finances and people's physical well being. AARP is looking forward to working with Governor Otter and the state legislature as we move past partisan rhetoric and toward health care reform that will deliver real solutions for Idaho residents.

2010 will be a tough year for Idaho, but together we can tackle the problems that lie ahead and work to deliver responsible solutions.

####