ELDER JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Panel Two: Public Policy and Awareness

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AFTERNOON SESSION

MS. GREENLEE: Welcome back after lunch. If you all could find a place to sit. We are going to start this segment with a video as the last couple of stragglers are coming in, and then we'll move to our
next panel. So we've got videos, two short videos?
Okay.
(Showing videos.)
MS. GREENLEE: Some of these videos are really just kind of depressing and not uplifting.
(Laughter.)
MS. GREENLEE: So, yeah, that's why we're here. So thank you all for your commitment. And when I look at the first woman, it's like we're all here because we just love these old people. I mean, that we're all here because we see these victims and it just breaks our hearts.

Speakers Panel: Public Policy and Awareness
MS. GREENLEE: So let's move to the next panel. Let me tell you about the group at the front. This is a little bit of a medley relay today for the agencies. So I want to continue to show that we have broad support on this coalition, but you'll see people come and go. We sometimes have other agency staff in the room even they're not at the front. Tony West will be joining us about 2:00. I know Treasury is supposed to leave -- had to leave. So we have more kind of feds
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1 among you out there as well as some people here. Our
2 goal today, of course, is to capture all this
3 information and be able to share it so that people who
4 weren't here for the afternoon get the benefit of your
5 testimony.
6 I was very pleased with the morning, and I
7 just want to encourage the rest of the panelists to
8 keep talking because I think this is what's been so
9 helpful.
10 So let me introduce our next panel. We're
11 going to talk about "Public Policy and Awareness." And
12 we've got four fine people here.
13 Kay Brown, who is the Director of Education,
14 Workforce, and Income Security at the U.S. Government
15 Accountability Office.
16 Hillery Tsumba, who is the Director of
17 Reingold, Incorporated.
18 Bob Blancato, who is the National Coordinator
19 for the Elder Justice Coalition.
20 And Marie-Therese "MT" Connolly, Senior
21 Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for
22 Scholars.
We're going to start with Kay Brown.

And, Kay, I haven't seen you, I think, since we did a field hearing with Senator Blumenthal. The report you're about to discuss I have also discussed widely, and I call it my "business card." We took that seriously, so I'm glad to hear from you because we want to keep about the task. So I turn it over to you.

MS. BROWN: We've seen pictures of you holding our report, and it warms our heart.

(Laughter.)

MS. BROWN: Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here today to summarize GAO's work on elder justice. Over the past 8 years, GAO has issued a series of reports on protections for older adults. We have surveyed area agencies on aging, state adult protective services, visited many states and localities, reviewed credible research, and, of course, met with many of you or your staff and others in this room. And I want to say thank you to all of you who were so helpful to us.

The bottom line? We found that the systems in place to protect older adults are struggling now and
1 may not be able to meet the increased demand for 
2 services in the future. Now, of course, states are 
3 primarily responsible for protecting older residents. 
4 However, the Older Americans Act and the Elder Justice 
5 Act have both established a clear federal role in this 
6 area, and we have identified a number of key issues 
7 that require federal attention if the nation is to 
8 strengthen its response to elder abuse.

First, human service agencies at all levels 
10 of government need to better understand the nature and 
11 the extent of the problem. They need better data on 
12 the types of abuse, the characteristics of the victim 
13 and perpetrator, the interventions tried, and the 
14 outcomes of these efforts. State officials and other 
15 experts told us these data would help them better 
16 target their efforts and lay the foundation for a more 
17 informed response.

While some state administrative data systems 
19 are outdated or incomplete, we know that this can be 
20 done based on the experience with child protective 
21 service data systems. It takes time, and progress may 
22 vary from state to state, but GAO has made several
recommendations to HHS to help kick-start this process.

Next, state and local agencies also need to know more about what works. Local APS workers told us their cases are becoming more complex and not enough is known about what interventions make a difference. They struggle to develop their own solutions, particularly when cases involve multiple forms of abuse. Carefully planned research and meaningful performance measures can help identify effective approaches, and then this information must be disseminated so it reaches the end user. GAO has recommended that HHS establish a national resource center, and HHS has already started this process last September.

Third, states and locals need help improving collaboration among local agencies. Elder abuse is a multifaceted problem requiring various agencies with different cultures and missions to work together to assure success. On our site visits, we learned that collaboration among adult protective services, law enforcement, prosecutors, and financial institutions is uneven, and this impedes their response. Use of multidisciplinary teams is a best practice that has
potential for improved outcomes, and service providers told us they need help with how to form them and how to sustain them.

Fourth, courts need support in screening and monitoring the guardians they appoint. We have talked about how many guardians faithfully carry out their duties in the best interests of their wards, but we know from our work that in some cases guardians have stolen assets and neglected or abused their wards. Without thorough screening procedures, unscrupulous guardians may be appointed, yet many states do not require criminal background checks for guardians. Further, without timely monitoring, abuse and exploitation may continue sometimes for years.

Some courts have begun to adopt changes, but progress is slow. We recently recommended that HHS fund evaluations of pilot projects to improve court monitoring of guardians.

GAO has also identified gaps in information sharing among federal agencies with fiduciary programs and among federal agencies and state courts. We have gone on record in the past encouraging SSA to take
steps so its staff can make certain information available to state courts upon request. For example, courts may find it useful to know whether an SSA rep payee has misused benefits in the past, especially if the court is considering that person as a potential guardian.

Now, at the time that we issued this report, SSA told us they did not believe they had authority to do this, however, based on what I've heard this morning, I'm feeling a little bit more optimistic about that.

Finally, making the public aware of what elder abuse looks like and how to report it is key to prevention efforts. State and local agencies told us they devote their scare resources to detecting and responding to elder abuse with little time or resources left for public education, particularly when they're not sure what works best in public awareness campaigns. The federal government is well positioned to lead a national effort in this area.

Before I close, I know I mentioned a number of recommendations that we've made to HHS, so if any of
you are feeling left out, take heart, we're releasing a
report on financial exploitation in November, and it's
likely that we'll have recommendations for a number of
other agencies in that.

(Laughter.)

MS. BROWN: In closing, you've already heard
about the various steps that agencies have taken
already. However, taken as a whole, federal efforts
have been fragmented, relatively small in scale, and
have had a limited impact on the elder justice field.
We are on record saying more leadership is needed, and
this Council is an important step in the right
direction.

Based on our work, there seems to be the
right combination of agencies represented in the room
today to work together toward a more coordinated
federal effort that addresses the most critical
priorities, is mutually reinforcing, and makes the most
effective and efficient use of scarce resources.

Thank you.

MS. GREENLEE: Thank you, Kay. That was
really funny and one of the most optimistic statements
I've ever heard someone say, about our agency would feel bad if we were left out of a GAO report.

(Laughter.)

MS. GREENLEE: I'm sure, I just was very optimistic. So thank you. Thank you. We look forward to being able to engage in some questions and answers with you.

Hillery, let me turn it over to you. Hillery Tsumba.

MS. TSUMBA: Thank you, and thank you, council members for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Hillery Tsumba, and I'm a director at Reingold, which is a communications firm that specializes in social marketing, which is communications focused on changing people's behavior, and I'm thrilled to be going after Kay, as she set the stage for me to talk about public awareness on this issue.

Research tells us that the public really does not know the extent of the problem of elder abuse, and, frankly, it's such a disturbing issue that the public doesn't want to know about it, but without that
knowledge and understanding, people cannot act to protect their family members, their neighbors, or even themselves from potential abuse. The urgency is, of course, growing as the baby-boomers age.

From October 2009 through August 2010, I managed a market research effort to determine the feasibility of a campaign addressing elder abuse, and the findings were clear. There is a strong need for a coordinated national campaign addressing this issue with clear and consistent messaging to educate the public about elder abuse. A strategic and multifaceted campaign including media relations, public service announcements, online tools and information, and community partnerships will help raise awareness and improve understanding of this complex issue.

Here's what a campaign could accomplish.

Number one, it will provide people with accurate information about what elder abuse is in all its forms -- physical, emotional neglect, and financial exploitation. It will show people where the abuse happens and teach them how to recognize it.

Number two, it will show people that elder
justice is relevant to them. Many people think that
elder abuse is a private matter or, "None of my
business," but it is everyone's business, and we need
to connect the dots and show people, "This is how it's
relevant to you. This is why you should care about
this issue."

Number three, it will reduce the stigma of
victimization and let people who are abused know that
it is not their fault. And we know this is critical
because the individuals who are abused are often
reluctant to report it because they feel ashamed or
embarrassed.

And number four, it will fight ageism with
messages that strengthen a system of values where older
adults are respected and appreciated.

With that in mind, there are challenges that
a communications campaign would face, but these
challenges are not insurmountable. And as Kay
mentioned, campaigns addressing related issues such as
child abuse and domestic violence faced similar
challenges when they first began their work, but they
have effected significant social change, and we can
learn from that experience and apply those lessons to a campaign addressing elder abuse.

Elder abuse is a complex issue, and it can get to the stage where people close to the issue can't see the forest for the trees. So public education campaigns need to step back and simplify the messages following the social marketing model of first raising awareness. People need to know the problem exists, and right now they don't.

Then improving understanding. Once they know there is a problem, people need to understand what it is, where it happens, and definitions or risk factors of the types of information that could be shared at this stage.

And, finally, inviting people to act. Once people understand the problem, they can begin to respond to it.

The time is right to roll out a multifaceted communications campaign to raise awareness of elder abuse. The interest is there among community-based partners to join this effort and although there are real challenges to consider, a thoughtfully designed...
1 public education campaign that capitalizes on the
2 interested partners is feasible and necessary. Now, of
3 course, such a campaign is just one piece of the
4 puzzle, but it is a critical piece because without it,
5 the issue will remain distorted and misunderstood by
6 the public.

7 Thank you for this opportunity, and I thank
8 you for your consideration of my remarks.

9 MS. GREENLEE: Thank you very much.

10 We'll go to Bob and MT next, but I think
11 before the two of you speak, we should just recognize
12 that you worked for a decade and you were two of the
13 primary leaders to pass the Elder Justice Act, and we
14 just would all like to thank you for being here but
15 also for --

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. BLANCATO: Thank you very much for that
18 nice testimonial. We appreciate that. MT and I did
19 labor in the vineyards, but there are many people in
20 this room who did as well. And I'm here as the
21 National Coordinator of the Elder Justice Coalition,
22 which I've proudly been since 2003, and we are a
nonpartisan 3,000-member coalition dedicated to advancing elder justice policy at the federal level. And we applaud the first meeting of this Coordinating Council; it's most welcome.

We worked closely with the Senate and the House in developing a language to establish this Council and the rest of the Elder Justice Act, which is all about developing a comprehensive and coordinated federal response to the growing problems of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation in America. This includes better coordination among different federal agencies to promote elder justice and prevent elder abuse. And this morning I have learned a lot, as everybody has who has been here, about the extent to which there are activities already going on, which I think is welcome.

First, I would like to address issues related to leveraging national partners to address elder mistreatment. There have been key relationships established between this administration and national partners, most recently the partnership for the historic observation in the White House of World Elder
Abuse Awareness Day earlier this year. It involved both private and nonprofit partners, including our Coalition. In addition, the composition of the National Center on Elder Abuse provides another good example of a unique multidisciplinary consortium of equal partners with expertise in elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Some of those partners are national organizations.

The naming of the Elder Justice Act Advisory Board and its 27 members from different sectors will inevitably lead to new and expanded partnerships including an exchange of information and ideas. The combined work of this Council and the Advisory Board can lead to an enhanced national elder justice strategy which should ultimately be the basis of a public-private partnership of commitment.

It would also make sense to break the topic of elder abuse down and determine which sectors are or should be involved in prevention and work to identify and cultivate national partners in the solution. This could include the medical, law enforcement, financial
sector, faith-based communities, information solution companies, elder lawyers, organized labor, and more.

In addition, an inventory should be done to determine and compile all activities of national entities currently involved in elder prevention work and help that leverage new partnerships.

I would like to address how the federal government can bring national attention to the issue and again foster better public and private partnerships to achieve the same goal. Certainly the convening of this Council is one important step. In blunt terms -- and this is no surprise to the advocates -- federal government leadership has been sorely lacking in the area of elder abuse prevention. It was the reason why an Elder Justice Act was first proposed and later became law. This administration has turned that lack of leadership around, but more lies ahead. It is about both resources and resourcefulness and also advocacy.

We need to fund and finish the implementation of the Elder Justice Act. As was noted earlier, we need to pass the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Elder
Among all the federal agencies represented here today, aren't there sufficient resources, if coordinated, to take the lead in embarking on a robust public education and awareness campaign on elder abuse prevention? Materials exist. The National Center on Elder Abuse and Skip's office and CFPB are good examples that can be built onto.

One very straightforward idea would be to include a set of standardized tips on how to prevent elder abuse, especially financial abuse, on every federal agency website, including those of members of Congress. We would add parenthetically that our Elder Justice Coalition and others are willing and able to be a distribution channel for educational materials and public awareness activities.

In terms of identifying gaps in the short term that can have immediate and practical action implications, one of these has to be data collection. In this greatest and most technologically advanced nation in the world, why is there such an inability to collect accurate incidence data on elder abuse? An
1 investment needs to be made in improving data
2 collection. It is another example of a public-private
3 partnership waiting to happen.
4
5 In the archives of ASPE there was a report
6 produced several years ago that was called for in the
7 original Elder Justice Act which addressed issues
8 related to how to do better data collection. That
9 playbook should be dusted off and brought back to life.
10
11 Another gap that most certainly needs to be
12 addressed is the unevenness of the country's numerous
13 and diverse authorities who investigate elder abuse.
14 One immediate step that can be implemented and is
15 called for in the Elder Justice Act would be to
16 designate a home for APS, and, in turn, vest it with
17 greater responsibility and resources to coordinate the
18 response to elder abuse. In addition, stronger
19 alignment between APS and the law enforcement community
20 at the national, state, and local level must be
21 advanced.
22
23 As Hillery has just mentioned -- it's almost
24 like we were collaborating here --
25
26 (Laughter.)
MS. GREENLEE: That's a hopeful sign.

MR. BLANCATO: It is. That's right.

(Laughter.)

MR. BLANCATO: Working with the media, social media, the entertainment, and advertising industries, aren't there more resourceful ways to get a message to the American public about how we can all stop elder abuse? This Council should include collaborations with those inside and outside of government who have worked with success in the child abuse and domestic violence prevention world especially around messaging, raising public awareness, and, yes, raising outrage about these problems.

In conclusion, we laud the convening of this Council, but we say do not become too much of a "Washington-based only" entity. The federal government has an absolutely key responsibility to take the lead in developing an elder justice strategy based on coordination, yet, as you well know, much of the work on the ground that is done in the fight against elder abuse is done at the state and local level.

There are hundreds of coalitions, alliances,
and committees across our nation working to prevent elder abuse. Recently, these coalitions were established under the leadership of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse in locations that never had one but had a growing elder abuse problem. We should be learning more about and from these local initiatives as part of the Council's work and its eventual recommendations.

As this Council continues its important work, I expect you will conclude that it is not about reinventing the wheel but rather redirecting it. Elder abuse prevention is a shared responsibility. Having the federal government take more responsibility is a step that is long overdue. We wish you success in your work and we hope you will continue to utilize us as a resource.

Thank you.

MS. GREENLEE: Thank you very much, Bob.

(Applause.)

MS. GREENLEE: MT.

MS. CONNOLLY: Thank you for inviting me to testify at this historic first meeting of the
1 Coordinating Council. My task today is to discuss how we might incorporate elder justice measures into ongoing federal activities. These recommendations are modest, cost-effective steps that could have a huge impact on the lives of millions of older Americans and those who love them.

Elder justice is a team sport. Elder abuse's multifaceted nature makes federal coordination essential, but ongoing federal programs, as has been said, too often give short shrift to elder justice. As pointed out by Kay, the GAO and Kathy's business card and other documents, there is a lot to be done here both in terms of leadership and coordination. But it also could have a profound impact.

Kathy Greenlee likes to -- well, let me say Kathy Greenlee, who has been such a fabulous --

MS. GREENLEE: Thank you.

MS. CONNOLLY: -- advocate for this issue --

(Laughter.)

MS. CONNOLLY: -- likes to give speeches in which she challenges her audiences to do one thing, just do one thing in the next year. So I would like to
take a page from Kathy's playbook and turn it back on the member agencies of this Council to say just do one thing in the next year.

My white paper has additional specifics, but I'm going to run through a few examples.

CDC should address elder abuse in its violence and injury surveillance and prevention efforts.

The DOJ-led financial fraud enforcement task force should incorporate elder financial exploitation as a focus of its work with its state and local partners.

The National Institute on Aging should issue a funding opportunity announcement that specifies elder abuse as a priority topic.

CFPB economists -- we know you've got a lot of big brains over there -- should be measuring the cost of and developing better ways to prevent financial exploitation.

DOJ should step up its worthless services and financial exploitation cases.

The Postal Service should be working to
identify the relevant and useful repositories of data so we can better leverage them in these cases.

The Department of Labor should promote fair labor standards for in-home caregivers and training to prevent and address elder abuse.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development should assure that people victimized or at risk for elder abuse have priority access to affordable housing and shelter.

The FTC should develop consumer protection programs designed for people with diminishing capacity and for consumers of long-term care regardless of the setting and particularly where there is no Medicare or Medicaid involved because that gives other federal hooks.

The Office of Violence Against Women, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Offices should incorporate the needs of older victims in all of their domestic violence, sexual assault, and other victim assistance programs.

The Veterans Administration should expand its
very helpful research showing the benefits of house calls to examine whether those same house calls might also prevent elder abuse.

The Civil Rights Division, the Office of Civil Rights, and the National Institute for Minority Health and Disparities should address findings that African Americans live in worse nursing homes than whites, that they're victimized by financial exploitation more than twice as often, and that Latinos are victimized by all forms of elder abuse at roughly four times the rate of whites.

The Social Security Administration should step up -- it's very helpful to hear about the pilot. It would be very interesting to see a measurement of rep payee fraud, beginning to get a handle on the extent of the problem, and what kinds of pilot programs work.

ASPE, along with AOA, should leverage the exciting prevention grants that the Secretary announced this morning as a springboard to begin the much needed process of collecting elder abuse data with the National Coordinator and others.
The National Institute of Justice should fund more research to illuminate forensic markers and effective justice system interventions.

The Bureau of Justice statistics should broaden its data collection efforts, building on a small pilot that it has in King County that you’ll hear more about in a bit from Page Ulrey.

The Department of Treasury should modify the FinCEN to include a box to check for elder abuse, as we heard this morning, and also to work with its 21-agency brain trust to get a better handle on how we coordinate the efforts that are going to be in part led by this Council, but it sounds like that would provide a good inroad, too.

CMS should develop reimbursement policies that promote prevention, offer priority waivers for victims, and screen for elder abuse in its wellness visits.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration and the National Institutes of Mental Health, Drug Abuse, and Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism should incorporate elder abuse concerns in their mental
1 health and substance abuse programs and research,
2 especially because practitioners on the ground tell us
3 that mental health and substance abuse problems are
4 present in most elder abuse cases.

We need the Administration on Aging to
5 incorporate elder justice measures into the Aging
6 Network, Caregiving, and ADRC programs.

And we need discussion. As the discussion
this morning made clear -- and Ms. Koide's remarks from
9 the Department of Treasury -- we need collaboration of
10 myriad agencies on research and knowledge dissemination
11 questions, and particularly about what prevention
12 measures work and what interventions work.

And who should we be targeting? We've had a
15 lot of talk about awareness, but we need to know who
16 we're targeting and how to fashion the message so that
17 they can hear it and so it makes a difference. Is it
18 the older person? Is it the younger people who love
19 them? Is it a planning message? There are so many
20 different options, and before we start ramping up on
21 the awareness programs, we need to know how to do it
22 right. So I think that's something that clearly a lot
of agencies have a lot to bring to the table on in terms of the research in that area.

And then also how to disseminate accurate information. We have some information now, but we don't do a very good job of disseminating it. That's a really important federal role.

And also to support and disseminate information about innovative approaches like multidisciplinary forensic teams and to evaluate their efficacy.

And then, as Mr. Smocer alluded to this morning, one of the most bedeviling issues underlying much of elder abuse is how you balance protection and safety on the one side and autonomy and freedom and the right to make -- you know, the right we have, as Americans, to make really stupid decisions, and how do we balance those? And that comes up again and again and again. And as Chuck and I were discussing at the break, it isn't so much that we want to target age, it's that we want to target diminishing capacity; age is really just a proxy for that. But how do we do that? And really just need to be a lot smarter about
how we do that.

One way that's been effective in accelerating progress is to designate a point person on elder justice in both the Secretary and the AG's offices, someone with agency-wide reach who can ensure both inter and intra-agency pressure and coordination. So that is another recommendation to consider because when agency heads convey to staff and the public and to other agencies that they care about an issue and want to see action, action happens.

On a personal level, it's really quite amazing to see this Council that Lauren Fuller and I imagined more than 10 years ago in March and April of 2002 while working on the Elder Justice Act come to life. It has taken a growing bipartisan village to get where we are, to get to this point today, and hopefully the village will continue to grow.

And back on the theme of do one thing, I think the most significant one thing that this Council can do to promote elder justice is to assure that ongoing strategic and coordinated leadership because in the end it's going to be this Council's shared setting...
of goals and shared accountability to your sister agencies, to Congress, and to those of us in this room today and the public for realizing those goals as well as the regular staff meeting and consistent leadership by you that will yield change.

We have coordinated spectacularly to lengthen life, now it's time to turn our efforts to improving well-being in the time we've gained.

Thank you.

MS. GREENLEE: Thank you, MT.

(Applause.)

MS. GREENLEE: Bob and MT both referred to ASPE. I just might, for the group, tell them that's the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, the Department of Health and Human Services. So our data people and our policy people.

MS. CONNOLLY: Sorry.

MS. GREENLEE: No, that's okay.

MR. BLANCATO: We're both guilty, right?

MS. GREENLEE: Yeah, you both. ASPE, I want to bring them into the loop.

I'm going to open it up for questions from
the panel. So I don't know if anybody -- why don't I
turn over here. Do either of you have questions?

MR. HUMPHREY: I have at least one. I'm
glad, Marie-Therese, that you only had one thing from
each of the agencies.

(Laughter.)

MR. HUMPHREY: If we could just do one of the
things that you talked about.

But I guess your point is well taken about
the problem of diminished capacity over a period of
time as people age. Could you flush that out a little
bit more as to who you think should be involved
directly in that? I mean, obviously we're interested
in looking at it from a financial transaction point of
view.

MS. CONNOLLY: I mean, I think all agencies
that are trying to mount prevention campaigns need to
be aware of it, but we need a research initiative to
say, what do we know today, and what do we not know,
and what do we need to know to be effective in terms of
awareness building, in terms of interventions, in terms
of prevention programs? And so I think it's a two-part
And Kathy and I were having this conversation last week. Diminished capacity isn't a "lights on, lights out" kind of phenomenon. You know, with developmental disabilities, it's a more clear audience, but maybe when they're entering into that power of attorney there is full capacity, but then things change, and some days are better than other days. You'll hear from colleagues who know a lot more about this than I do. So I think it's a much more difficult issue to get at.

That said, we do know that among people 85 and older, the fastest growing segment of the population, about half of them have some degree of diminished capacity. And so I think it's a research question initially, sort of a taking stock question, then a targeting strategic research initiative, and then deploying what it is that we know.

MR. BLANCATO: Right. And can I just add one thing to that? And that is -- and I think we've learned this all through this elder justice process -- we've got to start with a definition. Let's begin with
some definitions. There are a lot of terms that are
tossed around that people in this room may know, and
advocates, but we've reached a point where we need to
understand what it is we're talking about. What is
diminished capacity? And research can help you get
there, come up with a common term.

If you read the Elder Justice Act, the
definition section took forever to do because there
were so many things to put in there. But it's very
important to start there so that at least -- also in
building public awareness and education. People need
to know what the terms are that you are seeking to
raise awareness about.

MS. GREENLEE: Anything else down here?

Chuck?

MR. HARWOOD: Yeah. Well, let me start with
one question. I'm going to put you on the spot, MT.
You listed a number of things that -- many things
actually --

(Laughter.)

MR. HARWOOD: -- that you would like agencies
to do, and I'm grateful for that. I wonder if you have
any thoughts about what the private sector should do. What kinds of things can they do to -- or we talked about some of that this morning, but further thoughts on that?

MS. CONNOLLY: Well, I mean, I think the Financial Services Roundtable has really stepped up and I think is going to be a really increasingly important partner in this effort. I mean, I think those of us who are in the sort of non-profit advocacy world, you know, we need to ramp up our efforts, too.

MR. HARWOOD: And that would include nonprofit with the private sector, yeah, when you were just --

MS. CONNOLLY: I'm sorry?

MR. HARWOOD: Nonprofit as well, exactly.

MS. CONNOLLY: Yeah. I mean, I think we haven't done as good a job as we can or should either, largely for some of the same reasons, because it's fragmented, it's under-resourced, and because it's not an issue that a lot of the sort of more traditional aging entities that want to portray the more positive aspects of aging really want to take on, and for some
understandable reasons and some maybe less
understandable reasons.

So I think that we need to figure out how to
ramp up the advocacy on the outside as well and welcome
that kind of partnership. And then I think also we
need to get -- I mean, one of the reasons that, Skip,
the recommendation for you is to get a handle on the
cost because some of the initial data that's coming out
is that it has a huge impact on businesses, on
families, and also on caregivers.

I mean, Mark Lachs, who you'll hear from
later, did research indicating that basically it tips
over. If it doesn't outright kill you, then it really
reduces independence, so that you either are going into
long-term care facilities, going into the hospital, or
dependent on family members, and so that has sort of
this ripple effect on other caregivers and has a
financial as well as a health toll on not only the
victim but those around them and on Medicare and
Medicaid. And so I think as we get a better handle on
what the cost is of the problem -- and that's why it's
so important -- that we're going to get other people
who want to be invested because they're going to
understand more what their stake is in the game. Did I
answer your question?

MR. HARWOOD: Somewhere in there, yeah, there
was an answer in there somewhere.

(Laughter.)

MS. CONNOLLY: Bob will answer the rest of
it.

(Laughter.)

MR. HARWOOD: Anyone else, thoughts on what
the private sector and nonprofits can do in partnership
with us?

MR. BLANCATO: Kay, go ahead, please.

MS. BROWN: Well, I was just going to mention
that I heard several times this morning people talk
about how important banks and financial institutions
are in screening and being able to identify if they had
the right warning signs, be able to identify the kinds
of exploitation before it gets out of control.

MR. BLANCATO: I suspect there are a number
of different approaches to the answer to that. I mean,
if somebody could figure out what the business
But there is also the ethical side of this question, which I think ultimately may be a decisive factor in why more private entities could get involved, the whole concept of doing well by doing good and getting involved in this thing. But they, too, will need some guidance from those who are involved in the field, and that's why I think building the kind of partnerships that this Council has the potential of being a catalyst toward because I think there is a lot of interest out there, there is a growing amount of attention on this issue, but it needs to be sort of put into some kind of coordinated fashion, and I think you'll see more response going forward.

MR. HARWOOD: Yeah, that's a good one.

MS. TSUMBA: Moving from the private sector area into the nonprofits and community-based associations, in our research, we spoke to several organizations and found that there is a lot of interest in partnering with an effort addressing elder abuse,
but many of the organizations need to know what that partnership would look like. So people are looking for the tools and the materials already in existence to be provided to them that they would then hand out as a conduit to all of their audiences and the constituencies that they serve, but there definitely is that interest among community-based organizations.

MS. GREENLEE: Stacy?

MS. RODGERS: Thank you. There are really two parts to my question or thought. We will definitely take the recommendation back about the measurement of the incidence of exploitation within the Rep Payee Program, but I want to look or ask about your thoughts on the broader population because, as you know, we serve 50 million people a month, and that number is growing. Our rep payee component is very small when you look at 50 million people.

I would like to know what, MT and Bob, what your thoughts are when we go back to the communication piece that Kay mentioned about the GAO report because this communication piece is coming up for all of us because those who are exploited outside of the Rep
Payee Program, how do we tap into that particularly as our face-to-face contact, SSA's face-to-face contact, diminishes? Your thoughts about this communication piece. Where do we go?

MR. BLANCATO: Well, first of all, Stacy -- and I know that your Deputy Commissioner --

MS. RODGERS: Yes.

MR. BLANCATO: -- Carolyn, has been doing wonderful work around the country raising some of same themes. And I think your second part of the question is the interesting part, as your face-to-face contact diminishes, but there is still contact between your agency and older people and their families, and it seems to me that whatever remaining communicating messages there may be, annual earnings statement, whatever it may be that you're communicating to people, have a message in there of some kind that deals with elder abuse prevention, you know, warnings, tips, you know, because people -- I mean, Social Security is a big issue for a lot of people. As they get older and they start thinking about looking for the future, they should be able to think this forward. So I think
whatever remaining communication tools you have should include some kind of message that is engrained in anything you do with your customers.

MS. GREENLEE: Now that you've met Stacy, can I introduce her?

(Laughter.)

MS. GREENLEE: Stacy Rogers, obviously here from Social Security Administration. She's a Senior Advisor to Deputy Commissioner Carolyn Colvin. Commissioner Colvin has been very involved in our work, was with us at the White House in June, and Stacy I know from working on a closer level. I think Stacy is one of the key people at SSA that's helped us integrate the work between the agencies and keep us moving forward.

So I'm sorry I missed that. I'm glad you started right in on questions.

MS. RODGERS: Thank you.

MS. GREENLEE: So you have more?

MS. RODGERS: Well, Kay, I wanted to come back -- well, I'm sorry, MT was about to comment as well.
MS. GREENLEE: Yeah. I'm sorry.

MS. CONNOLLY: Well, I would like to agree with Bob and just echo the importance of what you're saying. I actually got a call this week from a woman who does a lot of work in southern West Virginia in a completely impoverished part of Appalachia where she said they were doing community groups with older people, and they kept raising safety as an issue. And it turned out that the older people's Social Security checks or income is the only income that these whole family groups have, and as rates of OxyContin addiction go up, they're being assaulted again and again for those monies, and that it was just ubiquitous in this community apparently, and she said, "What can I do?"

And so I thought it's a perfect example for this Coordinating Council because it would involve the Social Security Administration, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Postal Service likely, you know, a number of different agencies coming together to say, "How do we address these issues?"

So, I mean, I think Bob's point is a really
good one, but also the collaboration to say, okay,
we've identified a problem area, how do we deploy our
resources jointly?

MS. RODGERS: And if Carolyn was here, she
would say, "What gets measured get done," and things
get done through partnerships and relationships, and we
are definitely, definitely on board with Kathy and with
Skip in this area because I think Social Security was
sitting over here for a while looking at this more
transactionally in terms of money distribution, but you
cannot separate, from our perspective, financial
exploitation from elder abuse; it's integrated, because
abuse definitely follows money, I mean, it's
integrated, and helping to form that mindset about we
have to look at it from an integrated approach.

MS. GREENLEE: Kay, did you have a response?
Or you had a question for her. Okay.

MS. RODGERS: Kay, the question, I have goes
back to the GAO report because one of the things we
initially zeroed in on was this communication issue
both ways -- APS, us, states attorneys -- and how we
effectively do this because everyone around that circle
needs to know. My question goes to your thoughts about that communication strategy. The GAO report recommends that we do it, but do you have further thoughts and recommendations for us?

MS. BROWN: Well, maybe I should start first with what we don't mean because I think when I hear the number of individuals that you serve, we certainly aren't thinking that you would be combing through those millions of files or anything like that, nor are we, I don't think, envisioning a long process of developing routine use statements for data sharing with other agencies. What we are thinking about is something a little bit more practical, like while recipients of Social Security aren't necessarily in the offices anymore, the workers know if they have a rep payee and having those communications on a local level with the courts and the law enforcement are the places where I think there is a nexus that could be very useful either in identifying really guardians or rep payees that are doing an excellent job and identifying those that aren't and sharing that information.

And I think you're developing a database on
complaints of guardians? Is that right? Considering
developing?

MS. RODGERS: That's not what the pilot is about, but we are looking through all of our authorities in terms of how we communicate information when we find fraud on our side. It's important because if fraud is happening on our side, more than likely it's global, and we need to figure out how we communicate that to protect the person and the resources.

MS. BROWN: And we're sensitive to the issue of privacy and how difficult that is to kind of work your way through all the different thorny privacy laws. And I'm encouraged, I'm excited to mention that we are issuing a report in January on data sharing across Human Services programs with a focus on privacy. So we're trying to look for best practices and things there that might be helpful, too.

MS. RODGERS: Thank you.

MR. BLANCATO: Just one more point, if I could. You know, if you think about it -- and this came up earlier today about child abuse and domestic
violence, the uniqueness about the Social Security Administration is that you run the largest children's program in the country as it is, and it may be that there had been some stuff that was done in the past on child abuse that maybe could be used as we go forward, and since you touch all ages. You are truly an intergenerational agency in the federal government, and the number of people you touch, you could be in a great position to help reach more people with whatever the awareness message turns out to be, but which is important to know.

MS. RODGERS: Thank you.

MS. GREENLEE: So let me ask a final question, and it's a big one. So if we did this, if we did a national campaign, are we prepared to respond? I mean, where will the pressure system move in next? I mean, the solution to what you're asking is huge because where do we go after everyone knows? Hillery?

MS. TSUMBA: That is a very, very big question, and I think Kay mentioned that the response system is strained, but one of the important things to think about is that model of social marketing, which is
awareness first, then understanding, then action, and behavior change takes time. Certainly an effective campaign will eventually lead to increased reports, but that may not be the very first thing that happens. First people need to understand and accept that this problem exists.

I know today we've talked a lot about the financial exploitation side of things, and that is an area that more people in the public are able to digest, but that's not the whole iceberg of what elder abuse is, and the blinders are on to the rest of it. So we need to teach people that that exists long before we can start asking them to do the hard intervention of making reports.

MR. BLANCATO: I would say two things. One is if you combine an aggressive public awareness campaign that produced activity and combined that with data collection, then the action step would be we would make a stronger case to elected officials about money. I mean, it's all about being able to connect those dots. I mean, if you're going to fund something, you have to demonstrate there is a need to fund it.
1 I think the outgrowth of a well-orchestrated campaign combined with better data collection, you could walk up and make a case about it, and even the case that I know you care a lot about, which is the potential cost savings to programs like Medicare and Medicaid if you invest in elder abuse prevention, those kinds of things will be the outgrowth to some degree, but without doing it, you go up only half prepared to argue the right way for money.

MS. TSUMBA: May I add one more thing? There are also actions that we can ask people to take that aren't necessarily reporting. We can ask people to have their long-term care plan in place before they need it. We can ask people to designate their powers of attorney early and have discussions with their family members about what their wishes are. We can ask people to volunteer more with programs that would reduce isolation for older adults, since we know that's a risk factor. So going back again to the question of the call to action, there are calls to action that we can put in place that don't immediately strain the system and may help the system as well.
MS. GREENLEE: Okay. I think I will let you go. Thank you all very much for your testimony.