

Lundine Protests Funding Cut

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Rep. Stanley N. Lundine has lashed out against proposed \$4.7 million reductions in the 1979 Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) budget during hearings before the House Select Committee on Aging.

Lundine, a member of that committee, questioned Mary E. King, ACTION deputy director for the Older America Volunteer Program, and Robert C. Benedict, commissioner of the U. S. Administration on Aging, both of whom testified before the committee.

The 1979 budget request for ACTION, Lundine said, "singles out ACTION's largest, fastest growing and least costly program — not for the cost-of-living increase which its phenomenal success demands — but for a perverse cutback of 23 percent. That agency is RSVP."

The congressman pointed out that since the first RSVP projects received funding in 1971, the program has mushroomed into a network of nearly 240,000 volunteers aged 60 and over in 700 communities, most

of them countywide.

"Although senior citizens of RSVP constitute 93 percent of the ACTION volunteer force," Lundine said, "they account for a paltry 10 percent of ACTION's 1978 spending. The federal payment for each volunteer hour in 1977 going for food, transportation and local administration was only about 40 cents."

The proposed reduction would cause the loss of some 30,000 volunteers.

In direct questioning, Mrs. King said much of the program costs could be assumed by private funding.

"While I believe that it is good to leverage federal money with the use of private funds," Lundine replied, "it results in a much lower national priority for such programs."

"RSVP has enjoyed unparalleled success nationally including the Southern Tier of New York," Lundine continued. "Members of my own Elderly Advisory Committee have voiced their personal and

unanimous outrage over this senseless budget slashing. They have told me of RSVP projects in my own district which have made outstanding contributions to the community."

Lundine added, "Despite this, ACTION would have us decimate RSVP and instead fund new untested programs which propose to serve ACTION's own definition of 'basic human needs.' Such foolishness ignores the dignity of the volunteers for whom the program was created, as well as the needs of the public service agencies and individuals who depend on the help of RSVP volunteers. I urge my colleagues to repudiate this insult to a human and gentle volunteer corps. We must restore RSVP's appropriation to a level that will preserve its priceless service."

The Administration proposed cutting \$4.7 million from the 1978 funding figure of \$20.1 million for RSVP. Much of that cut, Lundine said, resulted from ACTION's own placements for a low priority on the RSVP activities.