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AARP CEO Responds to State of the Union Address

AARP CEO A. Barry Rand released this statement following tonight's State of the Union Address by President Obama:

WASHINGTON—AARP CEO A. Barry Rand released this statement following tonight's State of the Union Address by President Obama:

"The President's speech tonight addressed issues AARP has been working on since long before President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty began over 50 years ago. Social Security and Medicare have helped make a difference by protecting the middle class and keeping millions out of poverty, but many families and Americans of all ages continue to struggle.

"As we look toward this season of new budget proposals, we also urge the President and Congress to fight for responsible solutions to strengthen Medicare and Social Security. If our elected officials truly do want to fight economic inequality and poverty, they cannot do so with shortsighted changes that would hurt families and further undermine the financial security of the middle class in any generation. The President and Congress have an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the earned benefits of Medicare and Social Security, and to thereby strengthen our families, the middle class, and the American dream.

"Asking the business community to hire the long-term unemployed takes an important first step toward helping millions of jobseekers find work, and mirrors AARP's own initiative with employers who **pledge** to value experienced workers and give them a fair shot. However, due in part to age discrimination, older workers experience longer periods of unemployment, and are more likely to be among the long-term unemployed.

"Extending unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed would also provide relief to many long-term jobless workers, as would passage of the **Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act**, a bill that addresses the underlying issue of age discrimination and would help ensure a fairer workplace for older Americans.

"The creation of starter retirement savings accounts, known as 'MyRA,' could help encourage more private retirement savings for those without employer plans. This new savings proposal could be more effective if paired with automatic savings options and investor protections.

"AARP will continue to raise our voice on behalf of older Americans and the benefits they have earned and need. We look forward to working with President Obama and members of Congress from both parties to bolster health and retirement security for today's seniors and future generations."

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

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