A Congressional Briefing

Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective

According to a report, Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective, issued jointly by the U.S. Department of State and the National Institute on Aging, as the proportion of older people increases in the U.S. and around the world, nations will face new challenges and opportunities, particularly with regard to healthcare and retirement systems, intergenerational relationships within families, and labor market supply. On May 21, under the auspices of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-WI), Chairman, and Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR), Ranking Member, COSSA and the Population Association of America co-sponsored a briefing to discuss the findings and implications of the report.

In his demographic overview of population aging, Joseph Chamie of the Center for Migration Studies in New York City referred to population aging as a “triumph of civilization” and perhaps the most significant event of the 21st Century. Chamie described this as an achievement that required vital social and economic adjustments to current and expected future demographic realities. In particular, said Chamie “population aging raises critical issues for countries, states and cities in areas such as economic growth, employment and retirement, pensions, health care and social support services.” In addition, he cited figures indicating the graying of the industrialized world, Japan’s average age in 2050 is projected to be 55. At the same time in African countries such as Chad, Mali, and Niger, the average age will be in the mid-20s.

Noting the data on the social determinants of health and aging, particularly the growth of chronic diseases, Harvard University professor Lisa Berkman focused primarily on the epidemiologic transitions in health. “While the distribution of disease changes, socially disadvantaged people and those who are socially isolated continue to be at increased risk,” related Berkman. When the epidemiologic and demographic transitions collide, Berkman said, you will begin to notice a more diversified workforce, with flexible jobs for older people. Because many middle-aged workers are also caregivers to their elderly parents, they will also need more flexible jobs. Finally, Berkman concluded that benefit polices and practices related to retirement “may contribute more than we think to a healthier workforce.”

Adele Hayutin, of the Global Aging Project at Stanford’s Center on Longevity, focused largely on labor force implications and pension vulnerabilities. “Most advanced economies (the U.S. is an exception) face shrinking workforces,” said Hayutin. These shrinking labor forces will mean fewer and fewer workers per retiree that will place large burdens on low-income countries like India and Mexico. Despite increased longevity, labor force participation of men 60-64 has declined. Hayutin suggested that public pension incentives in certain European countries such as France, and Italy create these decreases.

James P. Smith, Senior Economist of RAND Corporation, explained that the falling of mortality, birth, and work rates will mostly determine the future of the world. Smith examined international comparative data to support his claims. Smith compared the U.S. aging problem comparable to the problems faced in Asia. According to Smith our disadvantage is the rapidity of an aging population at lower incomes with weak non-familial income and health security systems in place. Smith referenced the University of Michigan’s Health and Retirement Study (HRS), which surveys more than 22,000 Americans over the age of 50 every two years. Supported by the NIA, the study paints an emerging portrait of an aging America’s physical and mental health, insurance coverage, financial status, family support systems, labor market status, and retirement planning (www.hrsonline.isr.umich.edu). There are also comparable studies such as the English Longitudinal Study of Aging, the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe. These efforts at data collection have now been or will soon be extended to South Korea, Japan, Thailand, China and India.

With the U.S. population recently passing the 300 million mark and the World at 6.6 billion people, the demographics of aging and health will remain a major issue for policy makers. Major decisions about pension policy, workforce policy, and health policy will continue on the agenda.

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Why Population Aging Matters:
A Global Perspective

Hosted by:
Chairman Herb Kohl & Ranking Member Gordon H. Smith
Senate Special Committee on Aging

Monday, May 21, 2007
4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
G-11 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Agenda

Demographic Overview of Population Aging
Joseph Chamie
(Former UN Director of the Population Division)
Center for Migration Studies, New York
View Presentation -- http://www.cossa.org/Chamie.pdf

The Epidemiologic Transition in Health – The Rise of Chronic Disease
Lisa Berkman
Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Public Policy
Department of Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health
View Presentation -- http://www.cossa.org/Berkman.pdf

Labor Force and Pensions in Aging Societies
Adele M. Hayutin
Director, Global Aging Project
Stanford Center on Longevity
View Presentation -- http://www.cossa.org/Hayutin.pdf

Data for Policy Decisions
James P. Smith
Senior Economist
RAND Corporation

Moderator:
Mary Jo Hoeksema
Population Association of America

Sponsored by:
Consortium for Social Science Associations
Population Association of America
Speakers’ Biographical Sketches

Lisa Berkman, Ph.D., Thomas D. Cabot Professor in Public Policy and Epidemiology, is chair of the Department of Society, Human Development and Health at Harvard School of Public Health. Berkman is an internationally-recognized social epidemiologist whose work focuses on social determinants of health and aging. She edited Social Epidemiology, the first systematic account of the field of social determinants of health. The majority of her work is devoted to identifying the role of social networks and socioeconomic conditions in predicting age-related changes in health, onset of disease, and mortality especially related to cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease. Her current work focuses on the health effects of labor policies and practices related to flexibility and work/family issues. She is the past president of the Society for Epidemiologic Research and a member of the Institute of Medicine.

Joseph Chamie, Ph.D., is currently Director of Research at the Center for Migration Studies, New York, and Editor of the International Migration Review. He is the former Director of the United Nations Population Division. He has been with the United Nations in the field of population and development both overseas and in New York for more than a quarter century. Among other major duties, he was the deputy secretary-general for the 1994 United Nations International Conference for Population and Development. In addition to completing numerous population studies issued under United Nations authorship, Chamie has also written many studies in his own name in such areas as fertility, population estimates and projections, international migration, and population and development policy.

Adele Hayutin, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Scholar at the Stanford Center on Longevity and Director of its Global Aging Project, which initiates collaborative research and public discourse on the challenges of population aging. During a twenty-year career as a business economist, she has specialized in issues and trends affecting business investment strategy. She currently focuses on economic and policy implications of global demographic change. Hayutin has developed a comparative international perspective that highlights demographic differences across countries and illustrates the unprecedented pace of critical demographic changes. Previously, she was chief economist of the Fremont Group (formerly Bechtel Investments), a diversified private investment company based in San Francisco, senior real estate analyst at Salomon Brothers in New York, and director of research at RREEF in San Francisco. Hayutin received a B.A. from Wellesley College and a Master’s in Public Policy and Ph.D. in Economics from UC Berkeley.

Mary Jo Hoeksema, M.A., has been the Public Affairs Specialist for the Population Association of America and Association of Population Centers (PAA/APC), an organization comprised of over 3,000 behavioral and social scientists, including economists, demographers, and sociologists, who conduct population-based research, since January 2004. Prior to her position with PAA/APC, Hoeksema worked at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for approximately 10 years, as the Legislative Officer at the National Institute on Aging and National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and as the Special Assistant to the Director of the NIH Office of Policy of Extramural Research Administration. She came to the NIH in 1995 as a Presidential Management Fellow. In addition to her positions at the NIH, she has served as a Legislative Assistant for Representative Rosa DeLauro and Legislative Correspondent for Senator Jeff Bingaman. Hoeksema has a Master of Public Administration from the George Washington University.

James P. Smith, Ph.D. holds the RAND Chair in Labor Markets and Demographic Studies and was the Director of RAND’s Labor and Population Studies Program from 1977-1994. He has led numerous projects, including studies of immigration, the economics of aging, black-white wages and employment, wealth accumulation and savings behavior, and the interrelation of health and economic status. Smith was the Chair of the Panel on Demographic and Economic Impacts of Immigration (1995-1997), for the National Academy of Sciences. The Panel was convened to examine the interconnections of immigration, population, and the economy, and to provide evidence about the impact of immigration. He has served on the Population Research Committee at
the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He currently serves as chair on the National Institutes of Aging (NIA) Data Monitoring Committee for the Health and Retirement Survey (HRS) and was chair of the National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). Smith was the public representative appointed by the Governor on the California OSHA Board. He has received the National Institutes of Health MERIT Award, the most distinguished honor NIH grants to a researcher. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1972.

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