



For Immediate Release
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Washington, D.C. – This week marked the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care calls upon President Obama and the Office of Management and Budget to finalize the regulation on narrowing the companionship exemption to ensure home care workers are no longer excluded from minimum wage and overtime protections.

Home care workers provide care for consumers that far exceed simple companionship. In fact, many individuals who receive care and services in their homes could not do so without home care workers. They rely upon workers for help with intimate personal care and for the tasks of everyday life. If not for their workers, many home care consumers would not even be able to get out of bed in the morning or out of their wheelchairs at the end of the day.

Home care workers are vital to the delivery of quality care for elders and persons with disabilities. Yet despite their important work, home care workers are very poorly paid. Currently, under the FLSA companionship exemption, home care workers are exempt from the minimum wage and overtime protections granted to almost all other American workers. In December 2011, President Obama announced a proposed Department of Labor's (DOL's) rule to narrow the definition of the "companionship exemption," and to extend wage and overtime protection to home care workers. Increasing wages and giving overtime protections to home care workers is an important step toward improving the quality of the job. Improving the quality of the job makes workers' lives better, increases job satisfaction, reduces stress and improves morale – all of which means better care for consumers.

Within 20 years, one in five Americans will be over 65. As our nation ages, direct care workers – who are currently responsible for providing 70 to 80 percent of the paid hands-on long-term care for older adults – will be critical to providing quality care for consumers. Already the U.S. is dealing with an acute shortage of direct-care workers; a shortage that will only worsen over the next 20 years as millions of Americans will need long-term care.

As an organization committed to ensuring older adults receive person-centered, quality care, the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care urges that the proposed rule be finalized now to extend the federal minimum wage and overtime protection under FLSA to the nearly 2.3 million paid home- and community-based care workers, who provide essential services to our nation's older adults and people with disabilities.