

ISSUE BRIEF

Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act (S. 48)

Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced the bipartisan Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act (S. 48) in the U.S. Senate. This legislation provides a tax credit of up to \$500 towards the purchase of a hearing aid, available once every five years. This legislation would be a positive first step towards improving access to hearing aid technology.

- A 1999 National Council on the Aging (NCOA) study demonstrated that untreated hearing loss often results in distorted communication, isolation, withdrawal, depression, anger and severely reduced overall psychological health in seniors.
- Financial constraints often create a barrier for consumers in need of hearing aids. According to the Better Hearing Institute, the average cost to treat hearing loss with a hearing aid is \$1,700, and 80% of patients require two devices. Additionally, 61% of all hearing aid purchases involve no third party payment of any kind. Given these factors, about 30% of people with hearing loss cite financial constraints as a central reason for not seeking treatment.
- The failure to properly address hearing loss with a hearing aid is a serious problem for millions of Americans. The Better Hearing Institute estimates that hearing aids are the treatment of choice for more than 80% of hearing losses; however, only about 25% of the estimated 36 million Americans who could benefit by using hearing aids currently own them.
- Hearing loss is the most prevalent birth defect in America today, affecting 2-3 infants per 1,000 births. Children can be fitted with hearing aids soon after birth. Access to hearing aids for children remains a critical issue. It is estimated that children who do not receive early intervention cost schools an additional \$348,000 and are faced with overall lifetime costs of \$1 million in special education, lost wages, and health complications.