

Moses & Moses, P.C.  
3500 Blue Lake Drive, #495  
Birmingham, AL 35243  
Phone: 205-967-0901

**Winter 2007 Edition of Your Law**

**LIFETIME RESPITE CARE ACT**  
*by Anne R. Moses, Esq.*

Virtually all of us have experienced the need to provide care to elderly relatives or special needs children. Whether we recognize it or not, we quickly become drained, giving our “all” to these people we love; and having little left for ourselves or our other loved ones.

In late December, 2006, the Lifetime Respite Care Bill became law. Its purpose is to provide relief for an estimated 50 million American families who are caring at home for special needs adults and children.

*Respite Care* is temporary care provided by persons other than the regular unpaid family caregivers (or other unpaid adult), in order to give the caregivers an opportunity to receive much needed rest and a break from the never-ending responsibilities of caring for the aged or disabled in their homes. Many caregivers experience significant “burnout” from this responsibility and feel guilty that they need a break. “Mom took care of me when I was growing up, now I can take care of her.” Unfortunately, that view does not take into consideration that parents don’t respond as children do or learn to care for themselves, and the illnesses or disabilities often require constant care. Where one spouse is caring for another, the increasing burden on the older caregiver can result in injuries for that person that are more severe than those of the special needs adult.

The Act authorizes grants (for 5-year periods) to agencies, organizations or political subdivisions to develop lifespan respite care at state and local levels, provide services for family caregivers, train and recruit respite care workers and volunteers, provide information about available resources, and assist caregivers in gaining access to such services.

The Act also provides funds for training and other services that could be essential to provide respite care. The law also establishes a National Resource Center on Lifespan Respite Care to maintain a national database, and provide information to the public.

Because the law is so new, no pronouncements have been forthcoming from Alabama as to how it plans to implement this legislation. The participating State must provide

matching funds of 25 % of the costs. Such funds can be counted in cash or in kind, including plant, equipment or services. The grants can be renewed.

I urge you to contact your State Representatives and Governor Riley to take advantage of this opportunity. The money that will be saved by the government by not having the elderly or disabled in nursing homes and the improved quality of life they will experience by living at home being cared for by volunteer neighbors or family members will be substantial, as will the reduction in stress on family members who learn to care for themselves at the same time.

\*\*\*