For Immediate Release – January 3, 2014

Contact: Keri Pollock
Phone: 206-529-3881
Email: kpollock@alz.org

State Needs a Comprehensive Strategy for Addressing the Needs and Rights of Individuals with Alzheimer’s and Their Families

SEATTLE—The recent tragedy of a woman who froze to death in the courtyard of her assisted living residence is prompting us, the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and the Alzheimer’s Association, to respond. This is the second long-term care resident death due to exposure in recent years. Both victims had advancing Alzheimer’s disease and were found in a garden or courtyard, feet from residential care facilities during below-freezing weather. Both were known to have tendencies to leave their residences unescorted by caregivers, a common behavior of later stage Alzheimer’s patients. Our sympathies are with the families.

Bob Le Roy, Executive Director of the local chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association shares “A statewide Alzheimer’s plan could help prevent these types of situations, and help improve care and support.” Washington is one of only six states that haven’t begun work on a plan. "We need a statewide Alzheimer's plan to better support the growing number of people with dementia and to include appropriate dementia training for those who care for them,” added Patricia L. Hunter, the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Currently there are over 150,000 Washingtonians with Alzheimer's or a related dementia – a number expected to triple by 2050.

The plan will prepare our state to address a range of issues including: improving the quality of the health care system in serving people with Alzheimer’s; increasing awareness of Alzheimer’s disease among the public; encouraging early detection; and better equipping health care professionals and others to support individuals with Alzheimer’s.

How can you help?

Join us on February 18 in Olympia for Alzheimer’s Advocacy Day where we’ll present the need for a state Alzheimer’s disease plan to legislators. Visit the Alzheimer’s Association’s website at alzwa.org for details and to register.

The Alzheimer’s Association is the leading, global voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care and support and the largest nonprofit funder of Alzheimer's research. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer’s. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research, provide and enhance care and support for all affected, and reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Please visit our website at www.alzwa.org.

The Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman advocates for residents of nursing homes, adult family homes, and assisted living facilities. Our purpose is to protect and promote the Resident Rights guaranteed these residents under Federal and State law and regulations. We are trained to receive complaints and resolve problems in situations involving quality of care, use of restraints, transfer and discharge, abuse and other aspects of resident dignity and rights. Please visit our website at www.waombudsman.org/