

November 18, 2020 Advocacy Alert



Urge Lawmakers to Act on Virus Relief

There's Still Time to Pass Emergency Funding, Advocacy Needed for Aging Priorities

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Despite House passage of two versions of the HEROES Act, one \$3 trillion measure this summer and a \$2.2 trillion bill (H.R. 925) this fall, and negotiations between House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and the White House until just before the election, lawmakers have yet to make real progress on another round of emergency virus relief.

Unfortunately, inaction on COVID-19 relief funding is intersecting with rampant and record-breaking outbreaks of COVID-19 as the country heads into the holiday season and winter months. **Federal leadership is urgently needed and your advocacy at this critical point is essential!**

Conceivably, Congress and the Trump Administration still have time to agree upon and pass a comprehensive coronavirus response bill before the end of the year. However, with fewer than 15 legislative days where both chambers of Congress are in session, time is running out.

We urge Aging Network advocates and their grassroots supporters to weigh in one more time in 2020 with Senate and House Members—especially Senate Republicans—to implore congressional action! Urge them to pass a relief package that strengthens federal investments in helping older adults stay safe in this health and economic emergency.

Action NOW is Critical as Days in the Congressional Session Disappear

It isn't only advocates who are exhausted amid the unrelenting pandemic. Lawmakers are also eager to quickly wrap up must-pass bills and return home for the holiday season. However, should Congress adjourn without further action on

virus relief, millions of older Americans and their caregivers will be hurt as previous relief funds dwindle or, in some cases, expire at the end of the year.

It has been nearly eight months since Congress passed the CARES Act, yet Congress has yet to pass another round of follow-up relief to continue to support older adults through the Aging Network, to shore up state Medicaid systems, including home and community-based services, and to provide updated relief for the current health and economic crises. Divided by different positions on the size, scope and price tag of a potential relief package, Congress' inaction directly contradicts what we know are the urgent and ongoing needs of older Americans that AAAs serve based on n4a's report, [#AAAs At Work for Older Adults: A Snapshot of Area Agencies on Aging Responses to COVID-19](#).

That's why we need you to act today. **Action is easy as n4a's [key priorities](#) for the next COVID-19 relief bill have not changed!** *Especially if you have a [Republican Senator](#)*, please reach out again to tell them why it is imperative that Congress:

- **Provide another round of [emergency investments](#) in critical older Americans Act programs** that were supported in bipartisan and bicameral [Senate](#) and [House](#) member letters to congressional leaders.
- **Expanding access to Medicaid home and community-based services** (HCBS) waiver programs and community-living options.
- **Provide ongoing financial relief to states, communities and other essential safety net systems**, including for federal nutrition and vital block grant programs.

Action Requested:

→ **Please call your Senators and Representatives—most importantly your Republican Senator(s)—and urge local advocates to do the same!** Members of Congress must understand how important it is to older constituents to pass another round of coronavirus response.

- **Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121** to be connected to your Senator or Representative. Once you have your Senator's office on the line, use the following script to explain why you are calling and what you want your Senator to do.

Hello, my name is [\[Your Name\]](#) and I am calling from [\[City, State\]](#) to urge Senator/Representative [\[Name\]](#) to do everything [\[he/she\]](#) can do to ensure that Congress pass a COVID-19 relief package urgently!

Congress must not leave older Americans behind, and inaction will only harm older adults who face disproportionate risks from the virus. Tragically, nearly 80 percent of COVID-19 deaths have been among adults 65 years and older, and I am very concerned lawmakers don't understand how important it is to pass another relief bill that supports older Americans. This cannot wait!

I hope the Senator/Representative will urge leadership to continue negotiating to pass a relief bill soon that specifically helps older adults live safely in their homes as this pandemic persists.

Specifically, I urge Senator/Representative [NAME] to:

- *Insist on another round of emergency investments in critical Older Americans Act programs. This emergency funding for OAA programs has bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House.*
- *Support additional federal funding for state Medicaid programs to prevent devastating cuts to the home and community-based services that millions of older adults rely upon to live independently at home—and therefore avoid nursing home placement; and*
- *Provide ongoing financial relief to states, communities and other essential safety net systems including for federal nutrition and vital block grant programs.*

[Add any detail about why any/all of these asks are vital in your community].

In closing, I urge the Senator/Representative [NAME] to insist that Congress pass another round of bipartisan COVID-19 relief NOW! Older constituents and their families and communities cannot wait any longer for relief. Thank you.

→ **Urge your agency stakeholders and grassroots to call Congress as well!**

Feel free to adapt this alert and its talking points to reflect your advocates and community! No time? Forward this alert to your colleagues, advisory board members and volunteers and urge them to reach out to their Members of Congress—especially Republican Senators if applicable.

→ **If you can do more, use n4a's [social media toolkit](#) to engage your Senators and/or send a more detailed request via email.** Make sure to tag your Senators in your social media posts and urge your agency's stakeholders and advocacy network to do the same. Find how to email them on your [Senator's](#) or [Representative's](#) website.

→ **If you know that your lawmaker(s) already supports these critical priorities,** ask them to contact their party leadership (either Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY or Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY; or House Speaker Nancy Pelosi or Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-CA) to insist that they achieve a robust, bipartisan relief package that supports older Americans without delay!

If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or n4a's policy positions, please contact Autumn Campbell at acampbell@n4a.org and Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org.