

September 17, 2020 Advocacy Alert



## Last Chance to Urge Lawmakers to Act on Virus Relief!

**The Window of Opportunity for Action is Closing**

**September 17, 2020**

While the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications persist across the nation, lawmakers and the Administration remain mired in partisan posturing, preventing Congress and the White House from passing another round of substantive relief legislation.

The Senate and the House are both in session this month, but without significant additional pressure to act, lawmakers may leave for the campaign trail without passing a meaningful emergency relief package. n4a and many other national advocacy organizations are pulling out all the stops and imploring Congress to act NOW!

**But the pressure has to come from grassroots advocates!** We know your advocacy well is running dry following a spring and summer marred by the pandemic and, for many, other natural disasters. **However, this is likely to be our collective last chance to urge further congressional action that addresses the widespread suffering caused by COVID-19. We hope you will use n4a's updated advocacy resources and messaging to renew your advocacy efforts.**

### **Action Now is Critical as Opportunities Dwindle**

Following last week's unexpected Senate [consideration](#) of a coronavirus response proposal that lacked any significant support for older Americans hardest hit by the virus—and did not receive enough votes to advance—political will to make progress toward a bipartisan, bicameral compromise is diminishing. **Without additional and widespread advocacy, lawmakers may well leave for the campaign trail without implementing any additional emergency relief measures.**

It has been nearly six months since Congress passed the CARES Act. While the House passed an additional \$3 trillion in aid way back in May (the HEROES Act), Senate Republican leaders and the White House initially showed little interest in a follow-up to CARES for most of the summer, and now are advocating for a significantly smaller bill in the range of \$1 to \$1.5 trillion. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) proposed a \$2 trillion compromise, which would mirror the scope of the CARES Act, but a bipartisan deal continues to elude lawmakers.

Unfortunately, inaction directly contradicts what we know are the 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](#).

**It is essential that advocates do all that they can to urge lawmakers to pass a final package that strengthens federal investments in keeping older adults safe in the current health and economic emergency.**

**In a letter to Congress today, n4a advocated for our [key priorities](#) for the next COVID-19 relief bill, which include:**

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

### **Actions Requested:**

→ **Please call your Senators and Representatives and urge local advocates to do the same!** This is especially important if one of more of your Senators or Representatives holds a leadership position, or if you are calling from ME, CO, AZ, NC, MT, IA and GA, where some Senators facing re-election have extra incentive to act. Members of Congress must understand that they cannot leave older Americans out of a next round of coronavirus response.

- **Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202.224.3121** to be connected to your Senator/Representative. Once you have your Member's office on the line, use the following script to explain why you are calling and what you want your Senator/Representative 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 as soon as possible! 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 a compromise*

*bill that supports older Americans NOW. Every day without congressional action puts older adults at continued and increased risk. This cannot wait!*

*I hope the Senator/Representative will urge leadership to continue negotiating on a relief bill that specifically addresses the needs of older adults and helps them live safely in their homes during the COVID-19 crisis by providing supports and services such as access to in-home supports and nutrition and to prevent harmful social isolation as a result of the coronavirus crisis.*

*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 before leaving for campaign season! Older constituents cannot wait until after the election 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 better reflect your advocates and community! No time? At least forward this alert to your colleagues, advisory board members and volunteers and urge them to reach out to their Senators and Representatives.

→ **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 posts and urge your agency's stakeholders and advocacy network to do the same. If you can send an email, use n4a's updated [template](#). Find how to email them by visiting 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 Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY, or Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, or Speaker Pelosi or

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-CA) to insist that they keep working on a bipartisan relief package that supports older Americans.

***It is very important that advocates get loud to urge lawmakers to act to continue to support older Americans in the wake of the unprecedented coronavirus crisis!*** Without a sense of urgency, the window of opportunity for action may be closing.

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