Lawmakers Return to Districts and States Next Week

Tell Members of Congress to Reauthorize and Fund OAA Programs

October 8, 2015

Lawmakers in both the House and Senate will be in their districts and states next week. This is the perfect opportunity to reach out to your legislators and remind them how important the Older Americans Act (OAA) is to seniors in their communities. This will be one of the final district and state working periods this year and it is imperative that lawmakers—especially in the House—hear from constituents about reauthorizing and adequately funding the OAA this year!

Reauthorize OAA

The Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan Older Americans Act Reauthorization (S. 192) in July but the House must act before the bill becomes law. We know that House Education and Workforce Committee leadership is starting with the Senate bill as a foundation and negotiating a handful of changes, but Representatives must hear from you about the importance of advancing a bipartisan House bill this fall.

Achieving reauthorization also reinforces the critical importance of OAA programs and services developed, coordinated and delivered every day by Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI programs across the country. In order to get this done we need grassroots support for OAA reauthorization and recess is the perfect opportunity to communicate with your Members of Congress in your communities!

Fund OAA

While a government shutdown was successfully avoided last week, Congress has passed a temporary funding measure that will keep federally funded programs running only through December 11. Lawmakers will need to come to a broader consensus about how to fund programs for the rest of FY 2016 and whether to agree on longer-term, top-line federal funding levels that will offer some relief from the pain of budget caps and sequestration.

Your Members of Congress (both Senators and Representatives) need to hear from you about the harmful effects of reduced (and capped) funding on the programs that you run and the seniors you serve every day. For more information and background on the budget and spending debates, see our September 30 n4a Legislative Update, and use our appropriations campaign page for talking points and resources you can use when contacting your Representatives and Senators.

Take Action
Recess is a great opportunity for you to connect with your Representatives and Senators to show them why reauthorizing and funding OAA is critical to seniors in your community! There are several important things you can do and you can communicate next week when lawmakers are at home.

Goal #1: Get a Visit.  
Always invite your Representatives and Senators to see your programs at work: Lawmakers will be in their districts and states next week—this is the perfect chance to invite them to see the great work of your OAA programs. Even if you can’t get on their schedules for next week, now is the perfect time to extend the invitation for when they are back in their districts and states later this year!

Goal #2: Ask for Support of OAA Reauthorization and Funding.  
Reach out to or meet with your Representatives and tell them why OAA reauthorization is important: Tell your Representatives that you strongly support OAA moving forward in 2015. If your one of your Representatives serves on the Education and Workforce Committee, which has jurisdiction over OAA in the House, ask him or her to reach out to Chairman John Kline (R-MN) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) to support a bipartisan reauthorization. n4a and other national advocates sent a letter to Education and Workforce Committee Leadership and Members in July supporting House consideration of the Senate bill, S. 192. Consider echoing this support.

Tell your Representatives and Senators why reaching a budget deal that offers budget caps and sequester relief is critical to seniors in your communities: Make sure your Members of Congress know how constrained federal funding is directly impacting their constituents. The key ask is simple: Achieve a budget deal to offer relief from harmful budget caps and sequestration. Restore harmful cuts to OAA programs and services that keep seniors in their homes and communities. n4a and hundreds of other national advocacy groups are echoing this on Capitol Hill, but Members need to hear from constituents about why relief from federal funding cuts is so important to their communities.

Goal #3: Alert Others to Amplify Our Voices.  
Engage your grassroots network to advocate for OAA reauthorization and funding: To get this done, our voices must be loud and numerous! Activate your state and local networks through email, social media and any other advocacy tools you have. Also consider engaging:
- Your advisory board/committee members
- The provider organizations you work with
- The older adults and caregivers you work with
- Other aging advocates in your community

CALL AND EMAIL: Call the district and state offices of your Representatives and Senators and submit comments via their websites. District and state office contact information is available on the websites as well.

To find their websites, use these online tools:
- Senate: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Sample Talking Points:
- The Older Americans Act (OAA) funds programs—such as in-home supportive services, congregate and home-delivered meals, transportation, employment services and legal assistance—that help older adults remain in the much-preferred setting of their homes and communities.
- For more than 40 years, AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs, thanks to a base of federal funding through the OAA, have been the focal point in local communities where older adults and families receive vital information and get connected to available services.
For many older adults, the OAA’s home and community-based services can help prevent unnecessary hospital stays and readmissions and delay or avoid costly institutional placements, both of which save Medicare and Medicaid costs to taxpayers.

The Senate unanimously passed a bipartisan OAA reauthorization bill, S. 192, in July. It’s time for the House to follow their lead and get OAA signed into law this year!

We urge you to achieve a budget agreement that offers long-term relief from harmful budget cuts and sequestration and provides adequate funding for OAA for the rest of FY 2016 and beyond.

Reauthorizing OAA and adequately funding these cost-effective, successful, community-based aging services help seniors and caregivers every day in your district.

More on engaging your Members and other resources can be found at www.n4a.org/advocacy.

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.