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Advocacy**ALERT** FOR n4a MEMBERS & ALLIES

Time to Step It Up for FY 2018 OAA Funding Reach out to your Senators and Representatives in April!

March 30, 2017

The appropriations season has begun in Washington, DC. Building on [our annual appropriations request letter](#) to Congress, we've also begun requesting meetings with key Hill offices individually to make the case for investments in Older Americans Act (OAA) and other vital discretionary programs that help seniors.

But we need your help! **FY 2018 is going to be our most challenging budget year yet.** The two-year budget deal that helped soften the blow of budget caps has expired, which means the limits on discretionary spending will be lower in FY 2018 than they were in FY 2017, making it even harder on appropriators to avoid cuts to discretionary programs—including OAA and other aging programs. And, as you read in our March 16 and March 28 [Legislative Updates](#), the Trump Administration has already proposed significant cuts or eliminations to programs that support seniors, and more cuts may be proposed in May when the full budget is released.

That means we MUST take our advocacy to the next level this spring. We have to protect our most critical federal funding sources (and the incredible services you deliver in the community with them!) by getting buy-in from Congress. OAA has long had bipartisan support; now, more than ever, we must ensure that Republicans in Congress finish what they started in last year's OAA reauthorization and protect these vital aging services in their FY 2018 appropriations bills.

How do we do that? Effective grassroots advocacy is essential to ensure that lawmakers understand the value of OAA programs and the critical role they play in keeping older adults safe, healthy and independent in their homes and communities. While nearly 200 n4a members will do their part at the [n4a Aging Policy Briefing & Capitol Hill Day](#) next week to advocate for funding increases, **we need all 622 AAAs, 256 Title VI Native American program and all their local allies to raise their voices in support of Older Americans Act funding!**

State of Appropriations

President's Budget: As our March 16 [Legislative Update](#) detailed, the President's first round of budget documents eliminated multiple programs n4a supports, such as OAA's Title V (the Senior Community Services Employment Program), LIHEAP, Senior Corps and two flexible block grants. (n4a members can read [more](#) about the President's proposal to cut SHIPs in this fiscal year, FY 2017!)

Congressional Budgets: In Congress, traditionally, a formal budget resolution is prepared by Budget Committees in each chamber in March/April. A congressional budget resolution sets the total level of spending authority and revenues, with specific allocations to each major budget category. This non-binding, symbolic plan outlines the chambers' policy priorities and, if approved in time, guides the appropriations committees, as well as tax and finance panels, for the rest of the year. The health care debate in the House and confirmation hearings in the Senate have delayed this process somewhat this year, so budget resolutions may not be approved until after appropriators have started their work.

Appropriations Process: Traditionally in late spring and throughout the summer, the House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees of jurisdiction make the specific programmatic determinations for each discretionary line item (e.g., a specific program such as OAA Title III B). This takes several months to move through committee, and larger or more contentious bills can take all summer or fall before being passed. Like all other legislation, the House and Senate must agree on appropriations bills.

Despite the murky forecast at this point about how the House and Senate will proceed with their budget resolutions, appropriators in both the House and Senate are beginning to prepare their spending bills and are asking their colleagues for their requests—that's why this is the time to advocate!

Why We Need Your Advocacy

Years of stagnant funding, budget cuts and sequestration have taken their toll on the local aging programs developed and operated by AAAs and Title VI programs. AAA/Title VI leaders tell us that, as a direct result of ongoing federal cuts, they are increasingly concerned about the ability of seniors in their communities to remain living independently without costly institutional care.

Even though there has been partial restoration of sequestration cuts for some OAA programs, others, such as Title III B, have seen no restoration from sequestration. And now, the Administration is proposing further shrinking the overall size of the federal discretionary funding pie in FY 18.

With increasing costs and demand for services, the capacity of local agencies and service providers is shrinking. Competition among discretionary programs is at an all-time high in DC, and in order to be successful in this environment, aging advocates will need to step up our efforts to make the case for increasing OAA funding. If we don't speak out for the programs you see save lives and dollars in your community, who will?

n4a is asking Congress to increase all OAA programs—but particularly Title III B Supportive Services—to, at a minimum, meet the modestly increased levels established in last year's reauthorization bill. We are also asking for prioritized increases for Title VI Native American Aging Program and the Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program. But n4a's funding request letter was one of thousands sent to the Appropriations Committee's leaders, asking for funding for specific programs, and n4a meetings with House and Senate offices will be one of hundreds staff members take. (A full list of n4a's spending priorities can be found in our just-released [2017 Policy Priorities](#).)

To ensure that OAA programs get the attention they deserve, we need Members of Congress to share a similar message with their colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. This is where you come in!

Take Action Now:

Contact your Representatives and Senators early in April to advocate for funding for OAA programs and services. Use [n4a's March 6 letter](#) to appropriators as a template, but be sure to adjust it to fit your agency. Especially take the time to localize what this funding means for the older adults and people with disabilities in your state and community. Also, use [n4a's FY 2018 appropriations campaign tools](#) to help. Stay tuned to our campaign page, as we will be adding resources in the weeks ahead, including simpler messages that you can use to activate consumers and local advocates!

STEP 1: Fax letters to your Senators and Representatives. This isn't the time for quick calls or generic emails—send a real letter requesting their support. If you can put it on your agency's letterhead that's ideal. If not, send it from your Advisory Board or even yourself as a private citizen. Or do all three! Send the letter via fax and email to their DC and district offices. Find that contact info. on your Members' websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. (If you have relationships with staff members in the office, email them a copy of your letter, too!)

STEP 2: Make Your Support for OAA Funding Public.

- Attend any public events/town halls your Senators and Reps. are hosting during Congressional recesses, April 7-24 and May 5-15, and raise OAA funding during the Q&A!
- Turn your letter to your Member into a letter to the editor or op-ed and submit it to your local newspaper.
- Find out who of your agency's supporters knows the Member or will be seeing the Member and ask them to put in a good word for OAA funding and what it does in your community.

STEP 3: Invite Your Lawmakers to Visit. Both chambers will recess and be back in their states and districts May 5-15 so get on their local calendars NOW and engage them in your May Older Americans Month events! Even if you don't have an appropriate public event, individual site visits are also a great opportunity to educate your elected officials about key programs your agency operates and the critical services you provide to their constituents. All you have to do is ask! (Tip: put the request in writing! Call, email or fax the DC office to ensure your request gets to the Scheduler.)

STEP 4: Engage Your Provider Network. Urge your vendors/providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to urge send their own letters to Congress. Please do all you can to amplify the message and engage others who understand the value of OAA in their community!

Stay tuned for more updates from n4a, including consumer-friendly messages to drive calls to Congress as appropriations advance this month and next!

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.