Engage Your Grassroots to Increase OAA Funding!

Now Is the Time to Reach Out; Congress Making Funding Decisions

November 18, 2015

Lawmakers must decide federal funding levels for specific programs—including OAA—by December 11 when the current funding bill expires. Now is the time for advocates to weigh in with their Members of Congress to push for higher funding levels for aging programs that help a growing number of older adults age with health, dignity and independence in their homes and communities.

Overall, Congress has more money to spend due to the two-year, bipartisan budget agreement that was passed last month. However, the budget agreement does not provide funding for individual programs—that will be up to congressional appropriators to decide. (More details on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 are available in our November 6 n4a Advocacy Alert.)

It is more critical than ever that advocates weigh in with their Members of Congress in both the House and the Senate to tell them that funding for OAA needs to be increased.

In addition to contacting your Representatives and Senators to support increases for OAA, please encourage your grassroots to reach out as well! We’ve made this easy for you by organizing a national effort to call Congress and tell them to increase funding for OAA! Details on this campaign are included and we’ve developed a template that you can use for your outreach to grassroots advocates.

Congress should hear that, at a minimum, cuts from sequestration need to be restored to all aging programs and that additional funding is necessary to meet the needs of a growing aging population. It is especially important that your Representatives and Senators hear from you and your grassroots if they are members of the Appropriations Committee that will be making funding decisions!

Take Action!

Goal #1: Engage Grassroots! Alert Others to Amplify Our Voices

Engage your grassroots network to advocate for restored and increased OAA funding: To get this done, our voices must be loud and numerous! Activate your state and local networks to call and email Congress and use 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 CONGRESS: For the next two weeks, advocates can use 1-800-998-0180 to connect directly with Members. You can Use this template for your outreach to grassroots. It also includes social media messages.

Goal #2: If You Haven’t, Reach Out to Your Lawmakers to Ask for Support for Increased OAA Funding

Thank your Representatives and Senators for reaching a budget deal to increase discretionary caps on spending, but make sure they know that OAA programs need more funding: Make sure your Members of Congress know how constrained federal funding is directly impacting their constituents. The key ask is simple: We appreciate that the budget deal offers relief from harmful budget caps and sequestration. Now Congress must restore harmful cuts and increase funding for OAA programs and services that keep seniors in their homes and communities.

- If your Representative or Senator IS on the House or Senate Appropriations Committees: Please ask him or her to directly support and request increases for OAA funding levels that, at a minimum, restore sequestration cuts and adequately meet the needs of a growing older adult population. You can use n4a’s appropriations chart to show lawmakers the funding cuts since FY 2010 or borrow n4a’s language on specific requests detailed in our recent letter to appropriators.

- If your Representative or Senator is NOT on the House or Senate Appropriations Committees: Please ask him or her to contact their peers among committee leadership: House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rodgers (R-KY) and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY); or Senate Appropriations Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). Use n4a’s letter to frame your specific requests (e.g., boost OAA III B, prevent the SHIP cut, etc.) and/or draw from the broader talking points listed below.

Sample Talking Points:

- Thank you for achieving a budget agreement that offers relief from harmful budget cuts and sequestration. Now Congress must provide adequate funding for OAA for the rest of FY 2016 and beyond.
- 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.
- Adequately funding these cost-effective, successful, community-based aging services help seniors and caregivers every day in your district and state.

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

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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.