Thank Congress for Title VI Funding Increases!

December 21, 2015

Thanks to advocacy from you, n4a and other advocates for Title VI Native American aging programs, we secured a tremendous victory last week for Title VI programs! Every year, we push for increased funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) Title VI Part A and Part C funding streams—it’s always a top priority for n4a.

This year, thanks in particular to the leadership of House Labor/HHS Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK), Congress listened. n4a members have read about the funding boosts in our recent Legislative Updates, but we are happy to share this great news with all Title VI programs today.

Last Friday, the House and Senate approved a massive spending bill for the rest of fiscal year (FY) 2016 that will soon go to the President to be signed into law. Included in the bill are long-overdue, much-needed increases to the OAA Title VI funding streams.

Specifically,
- **Title VI Part A** (nutrition and other aging services) will increase by $5 million (19 percent) to a total $31.158 million for FY 2016; and
- **Title VI Part C** (caregiver supports) will increase $1.5 million (25 percent), for a total of $7.531 million for FY 2016.

**Take Action**

It is important that advocates recognize the victory that these funding boosts represent and thank Congress accordingly. No other OAA program received funding boosts of this size (by percentage) and most OAA programs remained level funded.

While we recognize even more needs to be done to provide resources to Indian, Native Alaskan and Hawaiian elders, before we come back to Congress with our request for FY 2017, we need to show them this increase is very much appreciated and desperately needed by your programs in order to serve more older adults in your communities!

**Action #1: Thank Chairman Cole**
We believe it was thanks to the leadership of Labor/HHS Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) that the Title VI increases were in the bill his committee passed out of the House this summer, and stayed in the final bill after negotiations with the Senate.
Please take a few minutes and send Representative Cole a hard-copy thank-you letter, expressing your appreciation that significant increases to Title VI programs were in this final FY 2016 bill.

The letter need not be long or formal. Put it on your tribe/program’s letterhead if you have it; if not, send a personal letter. Simply explain that your Title VI program is appreciative of the increases in the final FY 2016 appropriations bill. Add a few sentences about the elders you serve and how needed this enhanced funding is.

For example, here is some sample language in case it helps you frame your own:

Dear Congressman Cole:

I am writing to thank you for the increased funding for the Older Americans Act Title VI Native American aging programs in the recent appropriations bill. This funding boost is long overdue and very much needed to serve the elders in our community and around the country, and we thank you for your leadership to ensure that Title VI Part A and Part C both received increases this year.

In my tribe/community, our Title VI program, NAME OF PROGRAM OR TRIBE, serves [number of] elders a year, offering nutritious meals [X] times a week, providing respite to [number of] caregivers…. [add more details about your particular programs].

The elders we serve often face the threat of hunger, social isolation and...[discuss the challenges of your elders]. We believe the direct services and supports our Title VI funding allows us to provide greatly improves our elders ability to remain independent, healthy and in the community, thus saving other federal dollars like Medicare and Medicaid costs.

Address and send this hard-copy letter to: (you can only email him if you are from his congressional district)

The Honorable Tom Cole
2467 Rayburn House Office Building, US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Action #2: Loop in Your Member(s) of Congress!
Since you’ve already written the letter to Rep. Cole, take the opportunity to write to your own Senators and the Representative(s) who have constituents in your area.

Two ways to do this quickly:
• Simply cc: them at the bottom of your letter to Rep. Cole and send them copies of that letter to their local or DC offices.

OR
• Email them the same message as you did Rep. Cole via their websites, since you are a constituent and this will work for you.

Here’s how to look up their individual webpages, where you can also find mailing addresses and phone numbers:
  Senate: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
  House: http://www.house.gov/representatives/

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.