



Push for Bipartisan Budget Deal After Shutdown, Big Decisions Must Be Made

January 23, 2018

While federal government activities and services have resumed after Congress passed a three-week continuing resolution (CR) last night, there's been no actual advancement on raising the budget caps or finalizing FY 2018 spending.

What's holding up the finishing of these bills?

Congress never agreed on how much to spend on all discretionary programs for this fiscal year. And if they don't pass legislation that lifts the suffocating budget caps in current law (the Budget Control Act of 2011), that overall number will be smaller than nearly all lawmakers want. But without an overall number, and the 12 different allocations to each appropriations subcommittee, final negotiations between House and Senate appropriations measures can't be finalized. That's why a bipartisan budget deal is long overdue.

What's holding up budget negotiators' progress?

The reason that a deal hasn't yet been reached is due to the fact that Republican leadership wants to raise the defense spending cap significantly higher than the non-defense discretionary (NDD) cap, breaking with the tradition of parity between those two spending categories when raising the caps. If the NDD caps aren't raised sufficiently, cuts to aging programs could be the result.

That's why advocacy is *still* needed to press for parity for NDD in budget cap relief, as well as the highest possible levels of funding for specific aging programs in FY 2018!

Even if you've already written to your Members of Congress about these issues, please re-engage your Members of Congress now, and consider a fresh round of grassroots advocacy in your community while this topic is top of mind for many. If we don't push for parity in the budget deal, appropriators will have to make cuts. If we don't advocate for an OAA III B Supportive Services boost or against the elimination of the SHIP funding, who will?

Here's what we're asking Congress to do:

- 1) Finish a bipartisan deal to raise the caps that ensures parity of relief between defense and non-defense programs.**
- 2) In a very challenging budget year, n4a secured a major advocacy win when Republican lawmakers in the House passed a \$14.2 million increase for Older Americans Act Title III B Supportive Services, but we still need to ensure that**

increase is reflected in a final bill. Aging advocates must also ensure that the House-passed elimination of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and cuts to the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) and Elder Justice programs are not reflected in a final bill. Instead, we are asking Congress to, at a minimum, fund SHIP, SCSEP and Elder Justice programs at the *Senate* proposed levels, which would spare these programs from any cuts over FY 2017.

How do we do that? n4a [sent a letter](#) to appropriations leaders in the House and Senate detailing our priorities for a final FY 2018 funding bill, and we will continue to press the key appropriations offices. However, lawmakers are much more inclined to listen to their constituents, especially those passionate about a program that helps their community! Use our advocacy tools and resources to engage your grassroots and your Members of Congress on these important issues. *We need all 622 AAAs, 250+ Title VI Native American programs and all your local allies to raise their voices in support of Older Americans Act funding!*

Take Action Now:

Contact your Representatives and Senators NOW to advocate for funding for OAA programs and services. We've made it easy by creating this [template letter](#) that you can use to detail our current appropriations requests. Remember to fill in details about how these programs benefit seniors and caregivers in your community. We have additional resources to assist your advocacy efforts on our [FY 2018 Appropriations Campaign page](#).

We also hope you will engage your grassroots networks and stakeholders as you advocate for these programs with your Members of Congress. Use [n4a's template grassroots alert](#) to help frame your message, and add any other information that you think will help your appeal resonate locally.

STEP 1: Fax or, if you know staff members, email letters to your Senators and Representatives. 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! Use [n4a's updated template letter to Congress](#) to get started!

Send the letter via fax and email to their DC and district offices. Find that contact information on your Members' websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

STEP 2: Engage your grassroots in advocating for OAA, SHIP and Elder Justice programs. Use our updated [template grassroots alert](#)

to urge your vendors/providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to 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. Ask them to call and email your Members of Congress, and include specific examples about what OAA funding means to them!

STEP 3: Make your support for funding for OAA, SHIP and Elder Justice programs public.

- Use social media to amplify your message. Members of Congress pay attention to respectful tweets from constituents!
- Attend any public events/town halls your Senators and Reps. are hosting.
- 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 4: Invite Your Lawmakers to Visit. House and Senate lawmakers will be back in their states and districts frequently this year, so get on their local calendars NOW and engage them in your upcoming 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.)

Stay tuned for more updates from n4a on the progress of the FY 2018 budget and appropriations process.

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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.