Ask Your Senators to Support OAA Reauthorization

February 6, 2015

The Older Americans Act needs your help! While timing remains uncertain, n4a has learned that the Older Americans Act reauthorization bill, S. 192, which unanimously passed the Senate HELP Committee last month, could be considered on the Senate floor as early as next week.

Senate leadership put a call out to their colleagues yesterday to gauge support for the bipartisan compromise bill and to identify any potential concerns or possible amendments that may come up during debate, should the OAA bill be brought to the Senate floor.

This means your Senators may very well reach out to you to hear your thoughts on the bill. As n4a's Legislative Updates have detailed, S.192 is a bipartisan compromise bill that makes very modest changes to the Act. The bill has n4a’s support, as we believe it represents a reasonable approach to moving a reauthorization bill through this Congress and reinforces the critical importance of OAA programs and services that you develop, coordinate and deliver every day.

The legislation also includes a compromise provision to address the funding formula issues that stymied progress during the last Congress. n4a cannot weigh in on the merits of the funding formula compromise language given the geographical diversity of our membership. More information on the bill and n4a’s position is available in our January 21 Legislative Update.

While no compromise is ever perfect, n4a strongly supports moving a reauthorization proposal that will offer three years of stability to the Act amidst a very challenging budget and policy environment. Keeping up this new-found momentum in the Senate is critical to ensuring that we get reauthorization completed in this Congress, so please join us in pushing the Senate to act swiftly in support of S. 192.

Requested Action

Step 1) Please call or email your Senators as soon as possible and ask them to support S. 192 when it comes to the floor for a vote (again, we are not entirely certain what timing will be, but it could be as early as next week).
Step 2) If your Senator is a co-sponsor of S. 192, make sure to thank him or her for supporting OAA reauthorization.

Step 3) If your Senator is not a co-sponsor of S. 192, consider asking him or her to sign on as a co-sponsor.

Step 4) After you’ve made your outreach on behalf of yourself and/or your agency, enlist others in your community who understand the value of the Older Americans Act to take action as well! Pass this Alert on to your local and state grasstops and grassroots, including Advisory Board members, providers/vendors, other partners, community leaders, advocates and even consumers.

Key Messages:

Here’s a sample script for your calls or emails, but please be sure to personalize it.

“On behalf of [insert your agency name here or simply say “older adults and caregivers in MY STATE”], I support passage of S. 192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015, when it comes to a vote in the full Senate. The Older Americans Act is critically important to seniors here at home, as it creates and funds the vital home and community-based services that help older Americans to live with maximum health, independence and dignity. We are so pleased the bill has bipartisan support and urge the Senator to vote in favor of reauthorization.”

Tips:
—If you know who the DC seniors/health staff person is for your Senator, speak to or leave your message with him/her.
—If you can get the word out to your local networks and drive lots of calls, customize the above message to your state and encourage supporters to leave messages with the person in the Senate office who is answering the phone.
—If you have more time while speaking to the Senator’s staff or leaving a message, please add a few details about the value of these programs and/or provide examples of the types of programs you funded under OAA (e.g., in-home supportive services, transportation, etc.).

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.