Go Wide!
Engage Your Community on What Sequestration Means for Seniors

February 25, 2013

This week, Congress returns to Washington, DC from a week-long recess, no closer to averting the March 1 across-the-board cuts called the sequester. You know how devastating these automatic cuts will be to the programs and services your agency develops, coordinates and funds, and over the past year you have let Congress know, again and again. So it is time to go wide and engage a broader array of stakeholders in fighting this arbitrary sequester!

We are encouraging everyone to reach out to Congress this week—whether you are a AAA director, Board or Commission member, staff, older adult, caregiver, family member, volunteer or any other interested consumer who understands the incredible value of Older Americans Act and other federally funded discretionary programs.

[Sample talking points and easy actions steps follow, but feel free to customize this alert to your PSA before sharing widely with providers, community leaders, vendors, clients and others interested and committed to aging services and supports. Congress will respond better to state or district-specific data. If you do not yet have that data, see n4a’s January 31 instructions, which will help you collect critical data.]

What’s At Stake
If the proposed 9 percent across-the-board cut goes into effect via sequestration on March 1, vital programs in your community would be significantly harmed. Here are just a few of examples of what may happen to some of the Older Americans Act programs under sequestration:

- 18.6 million fewer congregate and home-delivered meals would be served;
- 2.1 million fewer transportation rides will be available to enable seniors get to the doctor or go grocery shopping;
- 1.6 million fewer people will receive in-home personal care services, such as help with bathing and dressing; and
- More than 62,000 family caregivers would lose access to respite care, counseling and other supportive services that allow them to remain in their critical roles.
Any “savings” from the sequester would pale in comparison to the added costs from premature nursing home placement for seniors who can no longer remain in their homes and communities; poorer nutrition and health consequences; increased falls and other avoidable crises that put vulnerable seniors at risk. *(For additional background on the sequester and more detailed talking points, see n4a’s new primer.)*

**How to Take Action**

1. **To participate, reach your Members of Congress via phone or email.**
   - **CALL:** Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) can connect you to your Senator or Representative’s offices.
   - **EMAIL:** Go to each Member’s website and submit your comments there.

   To find their websites, use these online tools:

   - **House:** [www.house.gov/representatives/find/#listrep](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/#listrep)
   - **Senate:** [www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

   After identifying yourself as a constituent, tell them that the sequester must be averted and any deficit reduction agreement to replace it should take a balanced approach.

   **Some sample talking points:**

   - **Millions of older adults in our state are already struggling every day just to pay for daily expenses and stay healthy.**
   - **They depend on federally funded programs like meals, senior housing, energy assistance and elder abuse protection to stay independent in their own homes and communities.**
   - **If Congress allows the sequester cuts to take effect on March 1, the impact on these programs would be devastating. Vulnerable seniors in our state could suddenly find themselves without the critical assistance and support they need to buy food, pay their heating bill, get help with daily living and afford decent housing.**
   - **As a result, millions of seniors nationwide would face ever-higher costs and the possibility of entering a nursing home.**

2. **Use social media to weigh in with lawmakers as well as other advocates and concerned consumers.** Use the #NoMoreCuts hashtag in your Twitter messages, encourage your Facebook followers to weigh in this week, and help your fellow aging advocates around the country raise the volume on the risks older adults face from arbitrary sequesters or rash policy decisions!

**Resources and Tools**

n4a has developed tools for you to use to reach out to Congress and to engage other advocates in your community. Our [budget campaign webpage](http://www.n4a.org/) has further talking points on potential cuts/reforms; fact sheets and state-by-state data on the negative effects of sequestration; a sample op-ed to place in your local media; and advocacy success stories and tools from your colleagues around the country.

n4a members will continue to receive the latest developments via our Legislative Updates in the weeks to come, but we urge all advocates to weigh in today with your entire congressional delegation.
Please let n4a know how your efforts are going. n4a's Public Policy and Advocacy staff: Amy Gotwals and Neal Karkhanis, 202.872.0888 or agotwals@n4a.org, nkarkhanis@n4a.org.