



AdvocacyALERT

FOR n4a MEMBERS & ALLIES

Make the Ask for FY 2019 Aging Funding Reach out to your Senators and Representatives!

April 17, 2018

Appropriations season is well underway in Washington, DC, and Members of Congress are beginning the process of determining funding for FY 2019, which is why advocates must connect with federal lawmakers about the importance of protecting funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) and other aging programs.

Hopefully, you've already [thanked your Senators and Representatives](#) for the significant increases to many OAA programs and services, as well as the preserving of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), LIHEAP, Senior Corps and several important block grants. (If you haven't, [do it today.](#))

Now we need to make our collective ask for FY 2019! We are off to a strong start, with the FY 2018 increases as a baseline and February's bipartisan budget deal, which overrode the Budget Control Act's caps for FY 2019, giving lawmakers a larger overall amount for discretionary spending.

But there's still much work to be done. Remember:

- The Trump Administration has called upon Congress to eliminate several important aging programs such as SHIP, OAA Title V and Senior Corps (For details, see our [Feb. 21 Legislative Update](#)).
- Congress still has to decide how to divvy up the FY 2019 "pie" among the 12 appropriations subcommittees, so there could be less funding than there was in FY 2018 for the Labor/HHS/Education subcommittee's bill.
- Within the Labor/HHS bill, there will be fierce competition between various interests and programs, so our voices have to be heard amidst the cacophony of other advocates!
- Preventing a proposed cut in the first place (such as the SHIP cuts proposed by both House and Senate in the past several years) is better than having to fight to the finish line to stop a bad recommendation in the final bill, as we had to in 2017-2018.

That's why we need your help! n4a has sent our [annual appropriations request letter](#) to Congress, and we've also begun requesting meetings with key Hill offices individually to make the case for investments in Older Americans Act, SHIP and other vital discretionary programs that help older adults.

However, we need local agencies to take your advocacy to the next level! Please reach out to your Members of Congress now to ensure that lawmakers protect vital aging services in their FY 2019 appropriations bills.

Why We Need Your Advocacy

Effective grassroots advocacy is essential to ensuring that lawmakers understand the value of OAA programs and the critical role they play in keeping older adults safe, healthy and independent in their homes and communities.

Years of stagnant funding, budget cuts and sequestration have taken their toll on the local aging programs developed and operated by AAAs and Title VI programs. With increasing costs and demand for services, the capacity of local agencies and service providers is shrinking. *The FY 2018 increases were a great first step at rebuilding that capacity—but more still has to be done to restore and keep up with the constantly rising demand for services.*

We need all AAAs, Title VI Native American programs and all their local allies to raise their voices in support of Older Americans Act funding. **We must ensure that Representatives and Senators know that stagnant funding risks the health and independence of their older constituents.**

The Ask:

n4a is asking Congress to increase all OAA programs—but particularly Title III B Supportive Services, the Title VI Native American Aging Program and the Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program. But n4a's funding request letter was one of thousands sent to the Appropriations Committee's leaders, asking for funding for specific programs, and n4a meetings with House and Senate offices will be one of hundreds staff members take. (A full list of n4a's spending priorities can be found in our just-released [2018 Policy Priorities](#).) This is why we need your support at the local level to back up our funding request.

Take Action Now:

Contact your Representatives and Senators NOW to advocate for funding for OAA programs and services. Use n4a's [April 16 letter](#) to appropriators as a template, but customize it to fit your agency. Especially take the time to localize what this funding means for the older adults and people with disabilities in your state and community. Also, use [n4a's FY 2019 appropriations campaign tools](#) to help. Stay tuned to our campaign page, as we will be adding resources in the weeks ahead, including simpler messages that you can use to activate consumers and local advocates!

STEP 1: If You Haven't Yet, Put Your Requests in Writing! This isn't the time for quick calls or generic emails—send a real letter requesting their support. 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 our template](#) but customize to your agency/community. 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: Make Your Support for OAA Funding Public.

- Attend any public events/town halls your Senators and Reps. are hosting during in the next congressional recesses (April 28–May 6 and then May 26–June 3), and raise OAA funding during the Q&A!
- 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 3: Invite Your Lawmakers to Visit. Members of Congress will be back in their states and districts April 28–May 6 (and later, May 26–June 3) so get on their local calendars NOW and engage them in your May Older Americans Month or other 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.)

STEP 4: Engage Your Provider Network. Urge your vendors/providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to urge 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!

Stay tuned for more updates from n4a, including consumer-friendly messages to drive calls to Congress as appropriations advance next month!

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.