Advocate for FY 2014 Older Americans Act Funding

Educate your Representatives and Senators

May 9, 2013

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) recently released final FY 2013 funding levels, all-inclusive of sequestration, rescissions and transfers. State-specific numbers are not yet available but will accompany the final formula grants in early June.

As expected, the funding levels reflect real cuts compared to FY 2012: roughly a 5.6 percent aggregate reduction over FY 2012 levels. The fact is that federal funding to support older adults and their caregivers has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals in need of services. Years of funding erosion has taken a toll on service capacity, and new federal and state budget cuts are further straining the ability of local agencies to help older adults age with dignity and independence in their community.

Congress must be educated on what this funding erosion—and now outright sequester cuts—are doing to local aging programs and services and what that means for their older constituents! We need your help.

State of Appropriations

As n4a previously reported, budget and appropriations season has begun in earnest. In the last few months, both chambers of Congress and the White House released their own budget resolutions and recommendations. Each approach is dramatically different and will affect older adults differently. To learn more, see n4a’s side-by-side comparison of the House and Senate budget resolutions, or our analysis of the President’s Budget.

n4a fully understands the economic realities facing governments and families. We support sound fiscal and federal budget decision-making that values key domestic programs to support our growing aging population, and we believe that an investment in programs that provide the means for older adults to age in the community is the best interest for all Americans not only because it is a more cost-effective alternative than institutional care, but also because older adults prefer staying at home!
It is critical that Congress sustains the capacity of Older Americans Act (OAA) programs by increasing total funding by at least 5.26 percent above FY 2012. In 2012, the nation’s population grew by 4.13 percent. Meanwhile, the cost of providing these critical supportive services increased by 1.09 percent from the prior year. We expect at least these levels of population and price growth for FY 2014, hence the 5.26 percent as a hold-harmless minimum. This 5.26 percent minimum increase in OAA funding would support critical programs including Title III B Supportive Services, Title VI Grants for Native Americans and Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program. For background information on this position, please see the appropriations section of our 2013 Policy Priorities.

In addition to investments in OAA programs, n4a is urging Congress to make critical investments into State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), the Elder Justice Act and health and wellness programs. Specifics of n4a’s ask can be found in our April 16 letter sent to appropriators.

n4a’s funding request letter will be one of thousands sent to the Appropriations Committee’s leaders, asking for funding for specific programs. To ensure that OAA programs get the attention they deserve, we need Members of Congress to share a similar message with their colleagues on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. This is where you come in!

**Advocacy Needed**

With so few dollars to spend, appropriators’ jobs shift from “what deserves an increase?” to “how much must we cut each program?” The bottom line is that this will be a tremendously challenging budget year and all Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI aging programs will need to step up their advocacy if we are to be successful in making the case for preserving or increasing OAA funding.

We urge you to utilize n4a’s messaging available on our FY 2014 OAA Appropriations Campaign page. On that page, you will find n4a’s letter to Capitol Hill, an Advocacy Leave-Behind Card, a list of key appropriators, n4a’s Appropriations Chart and other tools at your disposal. The critical request is at least a 5.26 percent increased OAA funding above FY 2012 numbers. It will be helpful to explain that 5.26 percent is merely a hold harmless request due to cost inflation and increased demand for services. We also urge you to include any data and stories of how sequestration has effected and eroded programs further in your service area or state.

**Action Requested**

→ Write your Representatives and Senators re: funding for OAA programs and services. Use n4a’s April 16 letter to appropriators as a template, but be sure to adjust your letter or email 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.

**STEP 1: Reach out to your Senators and Representatives.** Attend any public events/town halls they are hosting during the Memorial Day recess and raise these issues and/or email their local and DC offices. (U.S. Capitol Switchboard = (202) 224-3121. Email = www.house.gov and www.senate.gov)
STEP 2: Ask other advocates to do the same! Urge colleagues, advisory board members, volunteers and clients to make calls and write emails to their legislators, as well.

STEP 3: Invite Members to Older Americans Month events you are hosting in May (or beyond). This is a great opportunity to educate your elected officials about key programs your agency operates and the critical services you provide to their constituents.

If you have questions about this Advocacy Alert, please contact n4a’s Senior Director, Public Policy and Advocacy Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org or n4a’s Manager, Public Policy Neal Karkhanis at nkarkhanis@n4a.org.