Getting to a 2014 Older Americans Act Reauthorization
It’s Mid-August—Have You Reached Out to Your Lawmakers?
August 14, 2014

Lawmakers in both the House and Senate are half way through the August Recess, which is the perfect opportunity to reach out to your legislators in the key weeks before the November election and remind them how important the Older Americans Act is to seniors in their communities.

This month is one of the final district and state working periods this Congress. In (late?) July, n4a and 54 other national organizations that are part of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) sent a letter to lawmakers in both the House and Senate encouraging immediate action on the OAA. Additionally, n4a and coalition partners are meeting this month with key staff on the House and Senate OAA authorizing committees about advancing the OAA reauthorization, but it is imperative that lawmakers—especially in the Senate—hear from constituents about moving the Older Americans Act (OAA) this year!

OAA is currently stalled in the Senate, and the House will not act until the Senate does. But hope is not lost! The current compromise, The Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013 (S. 1562), represents a bipartisan, modest, reasonable approach to reauthorizing these programs. The bill also reinforces the critical importance of OAA programs and services developed, coordinated and delivered every day by Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI programs across the country.

In order to get this done we need a groundswell of grassroots and grasstops support for OAA reauthorization, and recess is the perfect opportunity to communicate with your Senators and Representatives in your communities! Read on for a few resources n4a has put together that you that you can use!

Take Action!

You still have time this month to connect with your Representatives and Senators to show them why OAA reauthorization is critical to seniors in your community! There are several things you can do in the next three weeks to help move OAA forward.

- Grassroots Advocacy:
  Submit an Op-Ed to your local newspaper about OAA reauthorization: Reauthorizing OAA provides a unique opportunity for bipartisan legislative success in an important election year. n4a has put together a template op-ed that you can customize with local examples of the importance of OAA-supported programs and services.

  Always invite your Representatives and Senators to see your programs at work: Have you invited your lawmakers to see the great work of your OAA programs? August is the perfect time to do so!
Engage your grassroots network to advocate for OAA reauthorization: To get this done, our voices must be loud and numerous! Activate your networks through email, social media and any other advocacy tools to contact Congress and demand OAA reauthorization is achieved this year! Also consider engaging:

- Your advisory board/committee members
- The provider organizations you work with
- The older adults and caregivers you work with
- Other aging advocates in your community

CALL AND EMAIL: Call the district and state offices of your Representatives and Senators and submit comments via their websites. District and state office contact information is available on the websites as well. To find their websites, use these online tools:

Senate: [http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

Sample talking points about OAA reauthorization:

- The Older Americans Act (OAA) funds programs—such as in-home supportive services, congregate and home-delivered meals, transportation, employment services and legal assistance—that help older adults remain in the much-preferred setting of their homes and communities.
- For more than 40 years, AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs, thanks to a base of federal funding through the OAA, have been the focal point in local communities where older adults and families receive vital information and get connected to available services.
- For many older adults, the OAA’s home and community-based services can help prevent unnecessary hospital stays and readmissions and delay or avoid costly institutional placements, both of which save Medicare and Medicaid costs to taxpayers.

Key Actions to Engage your Senators:

Reach out to or meet with your REPUBLICAN Senators and ask them to co-sponsor S. 1562: Currently, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Ranking Member on the Senate HELP Committee, is the only Republican co-sponsor on OAA reauthorization. Congressional staff has indicated that OAA may move more easily if there were more Republicans listed as co-sponsors. Please reach out to your Republican Senator and ask him or her to co-sponsor this bill.

Key Message: “Please co-sponsor S. 1562 to show your support for a bipartisan reauthorization of the Older Americans Act this year.”

Tell ALL your Senators (of either party) that you strongly support OAA moving forward in 2014 and ask them to help push it along: OAA advocates will overcome the current impasse only when constituents and their Senators show support for moving the bill forward. One of the most effective and efficient strategies to show the broad support for this bill is when, facing constituent pressure/interest, Senate offices call the HELP Committee staff to ask about the status of the legislation. This shows the kind of broad support needed to get through the tricky formula conversation. Please ask your Senator to help advance OAA reauthorization this year.

Sample talking points to tell your Senators about S. 1562:

- The Act came up for reauthorization in 2011, and there is a bipartisan bill, S. 1562, in the Senate that passed the HELP Committee but is currently stalled.
- We urge you to support S. 1562 and encourage your HELP Committee colleagues to reach a compromise regarding the funding formula to move OAA forward to be considered by the full Senate.
• Support these cost-effective, successful, community-based aging services that are helping seniors and caregivers every day in your district.

➢ **Key Actions to Engage your Representatives:**

**Reach out to or meet with your Representatives in both parties and ask them to co-sponsor the House OAA reauthorization bills:** In February, House members introduced two bills to reauthorize the OAA. **H.R. 3850** is a “straight” reauthorization that has gained 9 Republican and 2 Democratic co-sponsors, and would extend OAA current OAA programs through 2018. **H.R. 4122** is a Democratic bill introduced by Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) that is similar to the Senate compromise with some additional provisions to strengthen OAA. Ask your Representatives to co-sponsor one of these bills to show their support for your local OAA programs.

More on engaging your Members can be found in [n4a’s OAA resource page](https://www.n4a.org/advocacy) and other resources at [www.n4a.org/advocacy](https://www.n4a.org/advocacy).

**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.