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Older Americans Act Policy Update

September 18, 2019



Strengthen the aging services and supports that make it possible for older adults to age well and safely at home and in the community.

Reauthorize
the Older Americans Act

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To modernize the Older Americans Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

_____ introduced the following bill; which was read twice
and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To modernize the Older Americans Act of 1965, and for
other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*

2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Modernization of the
5 Older Americans Act Amendments”.

6 **SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

7 The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Table of contents.
Sec. 3. References.
Sec. 4. Definitions.

TITLE I—MODERNIZING DEFINITIONS AND PROGRAMS UNDER
THE ADMINISTRATION ON AGING

Sec. 101. Reauthorization.

Senate *Draft* Bill

- Bipartisan, so nobody got all they wanted
- Lots of reports for AoA to do!
- No new programs
- Hesitant to add new definitions
- Modernizing, but also queuing up the next reauthorization
- No authorized funding levels yet, nor solution to “hold harmless”
- Mostly driven by ideas from the Aging Network, Senate champions; a few from those who just showed up for reauthorization

Senate *Draft* Bill

Caregiving

- Encourages caregiver assessment (not mandatory), best practices, AoA technical assistance, report to Congress
- Report on social isolation and how Network addresses it
- Lifts cap on III E grandfamilies funding
- Extends RAISE for 5 more years

Nutrition

- States encouraged to be more flexible on C to C transfer
- Adds nutrition service provider definition
- Study on unmet need for nutrition programs

Senate Draft Bill

- Attempt to help on business arrangements
- Title IV evaluation & demonstrations
- Age-friendly efforts (turns federal coordinating body on aging into one on “healthy aging and age-friendly communities”)
- Cross-federal study on home modifications
- Updates language on multi-generational demos
- GAO Report on cost-sharing and voluntary contributions

Dignity in Aging Act: House Bill Introduced

Increases Funding for All Older Americans Act Programs

- Provides robust funding increases for OAA programs, which will help expand access to food assistance, transportation, and other basic services that a growing population of seniors need to live independently and with dignity.
- All OAA programs will receive an immediate 7 percent increase in fiscal year 2020 (FY2020) and a 6 percent increase every year thereafter. This results in more than a 35 percent total increase in program funding over the five-year reauthorization period, boosting OAA funding above its historical high watermark in FY2010.

Provides Support to Caregivers

Recognizes the vital role of family caregivers in supporting aging Americans, the Dignity in Aging Act by extending the authorization of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, which requires the development of a national strategy to recognize and support family caregivers.

- Improves the process for determining what types of support caregivers need, including the use of caregiver assessments.
- Eliminates the funding cap that limits the support older relative caregivers – often grandparents raising grandchildren – can receive under the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

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Puts A Greater Focus On Social Isolation

Empowers local organizations to evaluate solutions for social isolation, which greatly increases the risk of stroke, heart disease, dementia, and premature death, and incorporates social isolation screening into the health and supportive services that seniors receive. Directs the Assistant Secretary for Aging at the Department of Health and Human Services to create a new focus on the issue of social isolation among older adults at the national level.

Gives the Assistant Secretary New Tools for Research, Evaluation, and Demonstration Efforts

Establishes a National Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation Center for the Aging Network in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of HHS responsible for conducting, promoting, and coordinating research, including evaluation and demonstration projects, and related technical assistance throughout the Act.

Improves Economic Opportunity and Engagement for Older Individuals

Adds individuals who are justice-involved as a priority population for the Senior Community Service Employment Program. Allows for demonstration funds to be used for multigenerational collaboration projects that provide opportunities for older individuals to participate in multigenerational activities and civic engagement activities.

Strengthens the Services Available to Native Americans

Creates a demonstration program and authorizes over \$500,000 in additional annual funding to provide grants to tribal organizations to carry out in-home and community supportive services. Provides \$500,000 for technical assistance for tribal organizations implementing OAA programs in FY20.

Helps Communities Address the Needs of Older Individuals

Establishes the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Age-Friendly Communities and tasks the Committee with coordinating efforts to promote safe and accessible independent living environments.



Where Are We Now?

- **Senate:** Released draft bill June 5, *STUCK ON FUNDING FORMULA*
- **House:** Introduced Monday. Mark-up Today!
- **Act expires Sept. 30**
- **Advocacy Now:**
 - Contact your members of Congress to push for reauthorization of the Act.
 - Utilize n4a developed materials for grassroots, especially member education (n4a.org/oaa)

What You Need to Do Now

- **ALWAYS (and again):** Make sure every member of Congress in your state's delegation **knows how the OAA helps their constituents**, your community, and federal taxpayers
- **NOW!:** Use our OAA toolkit, use sample alert to **activate your grassroots**, reach out to media, etc.
- **KEEP IT UP:** This could be done this fall, or it could stall out, so stay flexible.

www.n4a.org/oaa

Older Americans Act

GET THE FACTS



For more than 50 years, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has connected older adults and their caregivers to services that help older adults age with health, dignity and independence in their homes and communities—where they want to be! **In 2019, Congress must again reauthorize this vital federal program that serves every community in the country.** With the rapid growth of America's aging population, it's essential that Congress make wise investments in critical OAA programs and services!

Why Is the OAA Important? The OAA...

- Enables aging at home and in the community where people want to be.** The OAA provides the person-centered services and supports that can help older adults be better able to age where they want—in their homes and communities—thus avoiding more expensive medical or institutional care. Examples include meals, in-home help, transportation, home modification, legal services and many other supportive services that keep older adults healthy and independent.
- Supports caregivers.** Family caregivers are the backbone of the nation's long-term services and supports system. The OAA provides vital supports to caregivers to bolster their ability to continue caring for their loved ones.
- Strengthens communities.** OAA services are delivered through a nationwide network of community-based agencies and service providers that know and can best meet the needs of older adults in their communities.
- Protects vulnerable older adults.** Through programs like the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, the OAA helps to identify and prevent the abuse and neglect of older Americans.
- Prepares us for the future.** The country is aging at an historic rate. Every day 10,000 people turn 65, and the vast majority of people want to age in place. If society is going to be prepared for an aging nation, we need to invest in the cost-effective programs, such as those provided by the OAA, that allow people to stay healthy and independent while living in the community!



Visit n4a.org/OAA to learn more about the Older Americans Act



Congress,
please
reauthorize the

#OlderAmericansAct!