

March 4, 2021 Advocacy Alert



OUR WORK IS NOT DONE! Contact Your Members of Congress to INVEST in Local Aging Programs

MARCH 30, 2021

While hard to imagine after the recent passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (and [yesterday's announcement](#) of additional funding from CDC and ACL), it is already time to ask Congress for increases for the Older Americans Act (OAA) and other critical aging services. While the advocacy n4a and its members conducted during ARPA negotiations was [incredibly successful](#), the law provides only one-time funding intended to address emergency needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, it's spring in Washington, DC, which means that appropriations season is well under way and Members of Congress have already started the process of determining regular FY 2022 funding levels.

Translation: OUR ADVOCACY IS NOT OVER! We have more work to do together this spring and we need you to take action! The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the importance of strengthening America's investment in the networks and systems already in place to support older adults, such as the Aging Network, OAA and other federally funded solutions.

n4a has sent our [annual appropriations request letter](#) to Congress outlining the critical importance of investing in OAA and other vital discretionary programs that help older adults continue to live with independence at home. n4a has also begun requesting meetings with key Hill offices. ***But that's not enough: we need Congress to hear directly from their constituents—and that's where you come in.***

Why We Need Your Advocacy

In addition to the growth in numbers of clients in need of your agency's programs and services due to the pandemic, years of stagnant funding and budget cuts have taken their toll on local aging programs. To be clear, while desperately needed and greatly appreciated, the several rounds of relief funding Congress provided in response to the pandemic was simply that, a response to the needs that arose due to the pandemic—not a recognition that funding for Aging Network programs and services needs to be

significantly increased on a long-term basis to serve the rapidly growing numbers of older adults who need them.

To ensure your agency can continue to provide older adults and their caregivers critical access to services past the pandemic while accommodating the demographic growth that is happening everywhere in the U.S., n4a needs your voice to champion bold investments in OAA programs and services.

In our appropriations asks, n4a has specifically prioritized four subtitles of the Act for major increases, including **doubling Titles III B (Supportive Services), Title VI (Native American aging programs) and III D (evidence-based health and wellness) and increasing III E (National Family Caregiver Support Program) by 50 percent.** This is the level of investment these programs should have had before COVID-19 and reflects what these programs will absolutely need after it! A decade of cuts followed by austerity has led to significant erosion in the ability of the Aging Network to meet the need. **Now that you've shown how many people you can serve with adequate resources, it's time to grow the baseline permanently!**

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 all members of Congress know that an increased-by-COVID client base and demographic expansions coupled with a previous decade of stagnant funding risks the health, well-being and independence of their older constituents.**

Take Action Now!

Contact your Representatives and Senators NOW to advocate for funding for OAA programs and services. Read n4a's [appropriations request letter](#) but use our grassroots templates ([AAA version](#) / [Title VI version](#)) to customize your asks to reflect your agency/program. It is important that you take the time to localize what this funding means for the older adults and caregivers in your community, Tribe or state.

STEP 1: Put Your Requests in Writing! Send a 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 templates ([AAA](#) / [Title VI](#)) but customize to your agency/community. Send the letter via 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 virtual events/town halls your Senators and Reps. are hosting during in the next congressional recesses (March 29–April 9 and then May 31–June 5) and raise OAA funding during the Q&A!
- Find out whether any of your agency's supporters know the Members of Congress serving your community or if they will be seeing them at any virtual events. If so, ask that they put in a good word for OAA funding and its impact in your community.

STEP 3: Invite Your Lawmakers to Visit, Virtually. Members of Congress will be back in their states and districts May 31–June 5, so get on their local calendars NOW and engage them in your May Older Americans Month or other virtual events! Individual site visits, even if virtual, are also a great opportunity to educate your elected officials about

the critical services you provide to their constituents. All you have to do is ask! (Tip: Put the request in writing. Call or email 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 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! You're welcome to forward this *Alert* to your networks or edit it to be best received by your advocates.

Stay tuned for more updates from n4a and, as always, we thank you for your advocacy!

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If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or n4a's policy positions, please contact Monica Billger at mbillger@n4a.org and Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org.