



Lawmakers Announce Deal on Older Americans Act Reauthorization!

January 29, 2019

After nearly a year of advocacy and negotiation, this morning House and Senate leaders released a bipartisan, bicameral bill, *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020*, to reauthorize the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) for five years. This is an exciting development that reflects significant commitment from and work by local and national advocates, congressional champions in both chambers, and key House and Senate staff. We believe this final compromise bill is poised for swift passage soon after the Senate returns to legislative business following the current impeachment activity.

n4a is digging deep into the compromise bill and will release additional details and analysis later this week, but **upon initial review, there are many wins for AAAs, Title VI aging programs and other Aging Network advocates and stakeholders to be excited about!**

While a modest piece of legislation—as most bipartisan bills are—the measure contains many of n4a’s OAA [reauthorization priorities!](#)

What’s in the Compromise OAA Reauthorization Bill?

The final compromise bill reflects many of the same—or slightly modified—provisions that were in the House-passed bill and the bill that the Senate introduced in December. This is good news as many of legislative specifics were carefully drafted and included intensive input from n4a and other aging advocates.

Some of the key provisions promoted by n4a and included in the final compromise bill include:

- Reauthorizing the OAA for five years, which is timeframe included in the House-passed Dignity in Aging Act (H.R. 4334) and two years longer than the prior reauthorization. The Senate bill initially proposed a seven-year reauthorization that was negotiated as part of the agreement over the Act’s funding formula.
- House-passed increases in authorized funding levels: a seven percent increase is recommended for the first year, with six percent increases in each subsequent year through FY 2024.
- Language to clarify that AAAs can, outside of the OAA, engage in private pay, integrated care and other arrangements to expand services, which is a key n4a priority and is also included in both previous bills.
- Removing the Title III E funding cap on grandfamilies and older relative caregivers, another top n4a priority.
- Authorization of an HCBS grant demonstration program for Title VI Native American aging programs to enhance the capacity of Title VI programs to support wrap-around supportive services to Native American

elders in tribal country. We are thrilled that the final bill also includes a House-passed provision authorizing an additional \$500k that could be used for demonstration activities or enhanced federal capacity-building technical assistance to Title VI programs. Both provisions represent top n4a priorities and required a lot of advocacy to advance.

- Establishing a research, demonstration and evaluation center for the Aging Network to improve assessment and promote advancement of the relationship between OAA programs and services and health outcomes. This final measure is a compromise between House and Senate provisions regarding research, evaluation and demonstration efforts.
- Encouraging states to work with AAAs to address potential administrative barriers to transferring funds between nutrition programs for congregate and home-delivered meals.

Of course, what's not in the bill is also important. n4a's policy team worked successfully to prevent any unfunded mandates or erosion of local control and flexibility. The Administration's recommendation to eliminate local governments' right of first refusal to serve as the AAA was not adopted. The bill does include a significant section on caregiver assessments but does not require all AAAs to provide robust assessments in Title III E, as pushed by others.

Next Steps for OAA Reauthorization

The *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020* was introduced as a substitute amendment to the House-passed *Dignity in Aging Act*, which was unanimously approved by the House in September. This means that the final compromise bill maintains the House-bill number, H.R. 4334, and will likely circumvent additional committee action in the Senate to move straight to floor consideration.

This is great news because it would significantly expedite the Senate approval process. While the exact next steps in the Senate are unclear, we do expect that moving this compromise bill is a top priority for lawmakers when they return to legislative business.

Following what we hope will be a speedy Senate approval, the bill would then have to go back to the House for passage before heading to the President's desk for signature. We don't anticipate major hurdles to House approval, but the exact path forward will become much clearer in the days ahead. However, we do know that action from grassroots advocates will be essential to ensuring that this bill gets across the finish line this winter!

n4a's Response to the *Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020*

We fully expect that in the coming days n4a will endorse the compromise bill and will encourage advocates to do so as well. **Stay tuned to n4a for breaking news and calls to advocacy action!**

And, don't forget to register for the [upcoming n4a Aging Policy Briefing & Capitol Hill Day](#), March 17-18 in Washington, DC, to stay fully up-to-day on the latest news on OAA reauthorization and implementation, funding and many other critical aging and health care policy updates!

This Legislative Update is an n4a membership benefit. For more information about these and other federal aging policy issues, please contact n4a's policy team: Amy Gotwals and Autumn Campbell at policy@n4a.org, 202.872.0888.

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