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## Tell Congress to Increase OAA Funding! *House Members in Districts Next Week*

**November 6, 2015**

Last week the Congress passed, and the President signed into law, a bipartisan, two-year budget agreement raising the budget caps for discretionary funding and potentially providing money to offset recent cuts from sequestration. However, the budget agreement does not provide funding for individual programs—that will be up to congressional appropriators to decide between now and December 11 when the current federal funding bill expires. (More details on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 are available in our October 28 n4a [Legislative Update](#).)

Because lawmakers now have roughly \$33 billion more in FY 2016 and about \$23 billion more in FY 2017 to divide up among discretionary programs—including Older Americans Act and other aging programs—it is **more critical than ever that advocates weigh in with their Members of Congress in both the House and the Senate to tell them that funding for OAA needs to be increased.** Members should hear that, at a minimum, cuts from sequestration need to be restored to all aging programs and that additional funding is necessary to meet a growing need for a growing aging population. n4a sent a [letter](#) to the House and Senate this week, detailing our request.

Please contact Representatives and Senators and ask them to contact leaders on the Appropriations Committees in the House and Senate to encourage committee members to, at a minimum, fully restore sequester cuts to Older Americans Act programs, and also to support additional funding increases for OAA programs that help a growing numbers of older adults age with health, dignity and independence in their homes and communities. If your Representative or Senator is a member of the [Appropriations Committee](#), it is especially important that you ask him or her to restore and increase funding for OAA programs!

### **Take Action**

Members in the House are on recess next week, which is a great opportunity for you to connect with them in their districts to show them why funding OAA is critical to seniors in your community! The Senate will still be in session in DC, however, so reach out to your Senators via their DC offices. There are several important things you can do now, next week when some of your federal lawmakers are at home, and then continue to echo until FY 2016 funding levels are determined later this fall. **The budget agreement was a positive first step, but we must keep up the advocacy drumbeat if we are to secure increases in OAA and other vital federal funding!**

### **Goal #1: Get a Visit**

**Always invite your lawmakers to see your programs at work:** Members of the House will be in their districts next week—this is the perfect chance to invite them to see the great work of your OAA programs. Even if you can't get on their schedules for next week, now is the perfect time to extend the invitation to both Representatives and Senators for when they are back in their districts and states later this year. These visits are also a tangible opportunity to demonstrate why funding increases are necessary.

### **Goal #2: Ask for Support for Increased OAA Funding**

**Thank your Representatives and Senators for reaching a budget deal to increase discretionary caps on spending, but make sure they know that OAA programs need more funding:** Make sure your Members of Congress know how constrained federal funding is directly impacting their constituents. **The key ask is simple: *We appreciate***

***that the budget deal offers relief from harmful budget caps and sequestration. Now Congress must restore harmful cuts and increase funding for OAA programs and services that keep seniors in their homes and communities.*** n4a and other national advocacy groups are spreading this message on Capitol Hill, but Members need to hear *from constituents* about why relief from federal funding cuts is so important to older adults in their communities.

- **If your Representative or Senator IS on the [House](#) or [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees:** Please ask him or her to directly support and request increases for OAA funding levels to that, at a minimum, restore sequestration cuts and adequately meet the needs of a growing older adult population. *You can use [n4a's appropriations chart](#) to show lawmakers the funding cuts since FY 2010 or [borrow n4a's language on specific requests detailed in our recent letter](#) to appropriators.*
- **If your Representative or Senator is NOT on the [House](#) or [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees:** Please ask him or her to contact their peers among committee leadership: House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rodgers (R-KY) and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY); or Senate Appropriations Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). *Use [n4a's letter to frame your specific requests](#) (e.g., boost OAA III B, prevent the SHIP cut, etc.) and/or draw from the broader talking points listed below.*

### **Goal #3: Alert Others to Amplify Our Voices**

#### **Engage your grassroots network to advocate for restored and increased OAA**

**funding:** To get this done, our voices must be loud and numerous! Activate your state and local networks through email, social media and any other advocacy tools you have. 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)

**House:** <http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

**Sample Talking Points:**

- Thank you for achieving a budget agreement that offers relief from harmful budget cuts and sequestration. Now Congress must provide adequate funding for OAA for the rest of FY 2016 and beyond.
- 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.
- Adequately funding these cost-effective, successful, community-based aging services help seniors and caregivers every day in your district and state.

More on engaging your Members and other resources can be found at [www.n4a.org/advocacy](http://www.n4a.org/advocacy).

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**If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert*** or n4a's policy positions, please contact Autumn Campbell at [acampbell@n4a.org](mailto:acampbell@n4a.org) and Amy Gotwals at [agotwals@n4a.org](mailto:agotwals@n4a.org).