



Association on Aging in New York

272 Broadway
Albany, NY 12204-2717
Ph. 518-449-7080
Fax 518-449-7055

Truly **URGENT** action needed by 5 pm Tues. Oct. 29!

Re: Older Americans Act reauthorization

Make 3 phone calls now!

Activate your aging services providers and supporters immediately!

Call Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and your Member of Congress. Washington office is best, but call their NYC office if the line is busy.

1. Senator Charles Schumer

Washington – 202-224-6542
NYC – 212-486-4430

2. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

Washington – 202-224-4451
NYC – 212- 688-6262

3. Member of Congress - <http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>

Congressional staffers – see Directory with staff contact information – if possible, both a phone call AND a follow-up email would be most effective.

WHAT:

The Older Americans Act Reauthorization is up for mark-up in the Senate HELP Committee this Wednesday, October 30. While only members of the HELP committee can vote on the mark-up, it's important to secure widespread support for OAA. National groups such as NCOA and n4a *support the Senate bill – S. 1562 – as it is, without amendment.*

The first step is to reach out to our Senators to support S. 1562, let them know how critical OAA reauthorization is for communities, families and older adults across the country. States with Senators on the [HELP Committee](#) are most critical (New York Senators aren't on the HELP Committee), however, Senators Schumer & Gillibrand can urge their colleagues to support. S. 1562. And we want to keep OAA on the radar of the New York Delegation in the House of Representatives – so contact the Congressman representing your area, in addition to the Senators.

n4a's most recent [Advocacy Alert](#) shares specifics on the bill as well as talking points for advocates.

MESSAGE:

SENATORS:

Please **pass S. 1562**, a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act so that the full Senate may have the opportunity to consider any controversial changes to the bill.

OAA funding provides services for older residents in New York to help them stay at home. New York has the third highest population age 60 and over, close to 3.7 million. No changes should be made to the funding formula until there is new money added to the Older Americans Act (OAA).

HOUSE:

Please urge your colleagues in the Senate to pass S. 1562 without amendment, which is a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

OAA funding provides services for older residents in New York to help them stay at home. New York has the third highest population age 60 and over, close to 3.7 million. No changes should be made to the funding formula until there is new money added to the Older Americans Act (OAA).

Feedback Loop:

Please send an email to laura@agingny.org with the action you've taken, and the response received from the members of Congress, so that we can track our collective impact. Thanks!

Background – the Basics

OAA:

The Older Americans Act (OAA) funds a nutrition program for home-delivered and congregate meals, transportation, assistance for homebound elderly and other important services. About ten years ago, changes to the funding formula that directs how much money each state gets were made which hurt NY state as we have received about only \$5 million new dollars for these services – very little new money with growing need. **NY has the third highest 60+ population in the country, almost 3.7 million.**

Proposed cuts to NY state:

Senators from states with less people over the age of 60 are trying to change the funding formula again, which would push back NY to funding levels before 2006, along with sequestration cuts to home delivered meals and other programs, this would be a double negative. Less money at the same time that the 60+ population is growing.

Counting “percentage” growth vs. “actual numbers”:

The proposed funding formula change would allocate OAA funding to states based on the “percentage” change to the 60+ population. However, percentage does not show the true increase in actual numbers. Since 2006, NY State has had a 12% increase or 416,000 people in the 60+ population. North Carolina, has had a 21% increase since 2006, which is 324,000 people over the age of 60. This would mean that NY would receive less money, even though the number of older New Yorkers has doubled compared to NC.

Robbing from Peter to Pay Paul:

The real problem is that Congress doesn’t want to increase funding for OAA nationally – just move the scarce dollars around, pitting states against each other. Simply put, changing the formula would take from one state in order to give to another, shifting resources. It would a national food fight for senior meals and services.

A better way:

The truth is, all states need more funds to cope with the burgeoning elder population. All states should send a collective message – increase the OAA funding across the board. These services help keep older Americans in their homes, avoiding more costly forms of care.

More Background -- Deeper into the Details

Resources from n4a:

[n4a video](#) 2-minute scoop on OAA reauthorization

[n4a Oct 18 letter supporting S. 1562 \(without amendment\)](#)

Senate [HELP Committee](#) – list of Senators and Committee information

n4a’s October 24th [Advocacy Alert](#) with talking points

OAA general resources from Aging-NY:

The Association on Aging in New York has prepared detailed documents on the importance of OAA, along with demographics charts *customized* for each Congressional district.

OAA individualized demographics for each Member of Congress [read more](#) (scroll down on page to view boxes with documents for each of the 27 Congressional Representatives)

Overview – “5 Reasons to Reauthorize the OAA” [view document](#)

S. 1562 Synopsis from NYSOFA:

S. 1562 is a modest, but bipartisan effort to reauthorize the OAA. It is not perfect, but it unequivocally represents the last, best hope we have to protect and reauthorize the OAA in this Congress, making the HELP Committee’s approval extremely critical. Without the Senate’s endorsement, the bill will die in Committee, as will any chance of reauthorizing the Act in the coming years. One of the risks of opening up the Older Americans Act for reauthorization is members of Congress seeking to get more funding for their states by changing the Interstate Funding Formula, the formula that directs federal funds to the states.

We have recently learned that some legislators plan to introduce controversial amendments during the hearing, which advocates and Hill staffers fear could derail the reauthorization process but even more important, if passed, would again take funding away from the Northeast states such as New York and redistribute funding to "higher growth" states, states that are seeing a higher percentage increase in the number of older adults but not taking into consideration states like New York that have a huge older adult population already (3.7 million). While New York continues to grow in terms of its older population, the growth rate, because of our already large older adult population, is not growing as fast as smaller states.

Sen. Burr (R-NC), the Ranking Member on the HELP Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the OAA, has filed amendments to eliminate the FY06 Hold Harmless provisions in the Title III funding formula. Obviously, this is a divisive proposal, and one that would impact states differently.

S. 1562 was carefully crafted through a bipartisan process and is intended to be non-controversial, in efforts to garner wide stakeholder support and ensure smooth Senate passage. If the HELP Committee adopts the proposed funding formula changes next week, the Senate would only receive the amended bill. At that point, off-Committee lawmakers whose states would lose funding under the amendment would likely prevent the legislation from moving in the Senate, effectively ending any chance for OAA reauthorization in this Congress.

NYSOFA recommends that the potential impact of any funding formula change be considered by the full Senate, an impossibility if the bill does not make it out of Committee. Accordingly, we encourage those of you who are able to weigh in with your Senators.

ACTION REQUIRED - Please contact Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and urge them to urge their colleagues on the HELP Committee to **pass S. 1562 as is**, so that the full Senate may have the opportunity to consider any controversial changes to the bill.

S. 1562 Synopsis from n4a:

(National Association of Area Agencies on Aging)

[n4a video](#) 2-minute scoop on OAA reauthorization

[n4a Oct 18 letter supporting S. 1562 \(without amendment\)](#)

[n4a Oct 24 Advocacy Alert](#) with talking points

Next Wednesday, October 30, the Senate HELP Committee will take up a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act. The bill (S.1562), a bipartisan compromise measure that makes very modest changes to the Act, has [n4a's support](#) as we believe it represents a reasonable approach to moving a bill through the Senate in the current political climate, and continues the critical support for the OAA programs and services that you develop, coordinate and deliver every day that serve millions of older Americans.

The legislation was introduced in late September by Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT), who all hold leadership positions on the [HELP Committee](#). *While only [HELP Committee members](#) can vote in Wednesday's markup, it will help raise the visibility of OAA and the importance of reauthorization if other Senators communicate their support to their counterparts on the Committee—and this is where you come in!*

Given the fragile nature of the bipartisan deal and the long, thorough process that led up to the compromise, n4a is also encouraging the HELP Committee members to approve the bill as is, with no additional amendments. We are concerned that additional changes to the bill during markup—no matter how well-intentioned or of merit the proposals may be—will derail the carefully balanced support for the overall measure.

Specifically, n4a expects there to be multiple amendments offered to alter the Act's funding formula provisions. *Since any significant change to the funding formulas would affect our members differently, n4a has a long history of abstaining from this particular policy conversation.* This time around, we have retained our neutral position and will continue to do so. We feel it is incumbent upon us to note, however, that if there are changes to the funding formula made at this stage in the process, the likelihood of the bill progressing smoothly to the Senate floor drops precipitously. The hope of Hill champions and advocates alike was to get a clean vote in committee so that the bill could be voted upon by the full Senate later this fall under rules reserved for non-controversial legislation. If the measure passes the Committee on Wednesday with any polarizing amendments attached, it may prove the death knell for OAA reauthorization in this Congress. If your agency can urge your Senator to express support for the bill as is and without amendment, please do so.

Key Message (from n4a):

Here is a sample script for your calls or emails, but please be sure to personalize it. For additional resources, view n4a's [OAA reauthorization toolkit](#) which includes additional [talking points](#).

“On behalf of [insert your agency name here or simply say “older adults and caregivers in MY STATE”], I urge the Senator to show his/her support for S. 1562, the Older Americans Act

Reauthorization Act of 2013, before it comes to a vote in the HELP Committee on October 30. The Older Americans Act is critically important to seniors here at home, as it creates and funds the vital home and community-based services that help older Americans to live with maximum health, independence and dignity. We are so pleased the bill has bipartisan support and ask the Senator to press his/her colleagues on the Committee to vote in favor of reauthorization.”

Tips (from n4a):

- If you know who the DC seniors/health staff person is for your Senator, speak to or leave your message with him/her next week.
- If you can get the word out to your local networks and drive lots of calls, customize the above message to your state for folks and have them just leave messages with the front desk person or the answering system.
- If you have more time while speaking to the Senator’s staff or leaving a message, please add a few details about the value of these programs and/or provide examples of the types of programs you fund under OAA (e.g., in-home supportive services, transportation, etc.).

If you have questions about this n4a *Advocacy Alert*, contact n4a’s Senior Director, Public Policy and Advocacy Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org or n4a’s Manager, Public Policy Neal Karkhanis at nkarkhanis@n4a.org