



Statewide Caregiver Call - Advocacy Update September 28, 2021

State

A. Voting/elections

Today is National Voter Registration Day (9/28/21). National Voter Registration Day is a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating our democracy. First observed in 2012, it has quickly gained momentum. To date, nearly 4.5 million voters have registered to vote on the holiday.

Who needs to register to vote?

A voter who is:

- a first-time voter,
- has moved,
- has changed his/her name,
- who hasn't voted in over 4 years, **and/or**
- who hasn't registered since his/her voting rights have been restored (e.g., after completing a felony sentence, change in guardianship status-including restoration of the right to vote).

B. Wisconsin's Plan - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) 10% Enhanced Federal Funds for Home and Community Based Services

CMS provided initial approval of Wisconsin's initial plan on 9/03/21, so the state can now begin to move forward with additional planning. Specific family caregiver/caregiving proposal in the plan include:

- Caregiver Assessment Pilot
- Caregiver Training
- Creation of a state-funded program that provides short-term, flexible, limited services and supports (like home modifications, limited supportive home care, or respite care) for Wisconsin residents (pre-Medicaid and/or pre-long-term care services).
- Creation of a two-year pilot Independent Living and Caregiver Support program. The pilot program would offer annual reimbursements for intermittent and one-time services and supports for qualifying individuals or family caregivers.

Federal

A. **Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, & Engage (RAISE) Family Caregiving Advisory Council Report**

The report, delivered to Congress last week, provides an overview of many of the issues faced by family caregivers nationwide and provides recommendations for addressing them. The recommendations will form the foundation of the National Family Caregiving Strategy, which will include action steps to increase recognition and support for family caregivers.

The 26 recommendations fall under five goals:

- **Increasing Awareness of Family Caregivers** (5 recommendations) to increase public understanding of the contributions caregivers make, including helping individuals self-identify as caregivers so that they can get the support they need.
- **Engaging Family Caregivers as Partners in Healthcare and Long-Term Services and Supports** (5 recommendations) to better integrate family caregivers into healthcare processes and systems.
- **Improving Access to Services and Supports for Family Caregivers** (9 recommendations) including counseling, respite care, peer support, training on common in-home medical tasks, and practical assistance like transportation. Also included is a recommendation for strengthening the paid caregiver workforce.
- **Financial and Workplace Security for Family Caregivers** (4 recommendations) to decrease the impact family caregiving can have on the financial well-being and professional lives of caregivers.
- **Generating Research, Data, and Evidence-Informed Practices** (3 recommendations) to help create policies and interventions that meaningfully help family caregivers.

The full report can be found here: <https://acl.gov/programs/support-caregivers/raise-family-caregiving-advisory-council>

B. **House Passes Bill to Prevent Government Shutdown and Suspend Debt Limit**

Last week the House passed legislation that continues federal funding into federal fiscal year 2022, avoiding a government shutdown at the end of the federal fiscal year on Sept. 30, until Congress approves all twelve annual appropriations bills for FY 2022. The legislation included a debt limit suspension, which Treasury Sec. Janet Yellen indicates is needed (either a suspension or raising of the limit) for the federal government to be able to continue to pay its bills in October.

The Senate must now also pass this legislation before it can be sent to the President's desk for his signature; however, inclusion of the debt limit suspension in the continuing resolution (CR) is slowing movement of the bill in the Senate. Stay tuned as the end of the federal fiscal year is just days away.

C. Infrastructure Bill

The \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill passed by the Senate in August is now awaiting passage in the House. The bill includes investments in transportation and energy systems, as well as funding for large broadband expansion projects. The House is expected to vote on the infrastructure bill this week but voting continues to be delayed as House leadership also works to secure votes for a larger economic recovery and care infrastructure bill that expands social safety net programs

D. Care Infrastructure Package

The House and Senate continue to negotiate on a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution that advances the Biden administration's massive care infrastructure package.

The reconciliation package includes the following provisions (and more): **expanding paid family and medical leave, making childcare more accessible**, creating universal pre-K and tuition-free community college, and extending enhanced household tax credits passed during the coronavirus pandemic. It also recommends lowering the Medicare eligibility age and **expanding benefits to include dental, vision and hearing. The package also includes \$1.3 billion for Older Americans Act programs.**

Earlier this month, **the House Education and Labor Committee (which has jurisdiction over the Older Americans Act [OAA] and other key aging service programs) introduced its portion of the \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package with a \$761 billion bill.** Thanks to continued advocacy and dedicated congressional champions, the package includes an **additional investment of \$1.3 billion** in critically needed Older Americans Act funding. This bill, should it be enacted into law in its current form, would provide the type of direct appropriations that Congress provided in the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)—in other words, **it is in addition to regular, annual appropriations, may be spent over several years, and does not replace the forthcoming FY 2022 appropriations bill. Importantly, this proposal includes a waiver of the state and local match typically required for OAA services for both the new funding included in the reconciliation package as well as retroactively to the funding provided under ARPA.**

Specific OAA program allocations in the Committee's legislation include:

- **\$655 million for OAA Title III B Home & Community-Based Supportive Services** – including III B direct services; activities to improve the availability of services (including workforce initiatives); acquisition, modification, or renovation of facilities; and construction or modification of multipurpose senior center facilities;
- **\$140 million for OAA Title III C Nutrition Services** to support the modernization of infrastructure and technology, including kitchen equipment and delivery vehicles;
- **\$150 million for the OAA Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program;**
- **\$50 million for OAA Title VI Native American Nutrition, Supportive and Caregiver Services** to support the modernization of infrastructure and technology including kitchen equipment and delivery vehicles investment for sustainability of food distribution in congregate and home-delivered programs;

- **\$50 million for OAA Title VII Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**, a nearly 48 percent increase to the current level of spending for the LTCOP, clearly a pandemic-influenced decision to improve our nation’s protection of nursing home residents;
- **\$75 million for the Research, Demonstration and Evaluation Center** at the Administration on Aging, established during the 2020 reauthorization of the OAA to improve assessment and promote advancement of the relationship between OAA programs and services and health outcomes;
- **\$1 million to support expanding the reach of aging services that address social isolation;**
- **\$59 million for technical assistance or national resource centers under OAA Title IV to support technical assistance and resource development for older individuals who have the greatest social need**, including racial and ethnic minority individuals;
- **\$15 million for technical assistance centers or national resource centers focused on providing services for populations underserved in communities due to sexual orientation or gender identity;**
- **\$5 million to support multi-generational program and demonstration projects** within section 417 of OAA; and
- **\$100 million for the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP).**

The full House hopes to pass the final bill by the end of the month, though this timeline may be postponed. The legislation will then move to the Senate, where there remains uncertainty about the outcome of the bill. The Senate must adhere to the “Byrd Rule” which limits the scope of reconciliation legislation only to provisions that are primarily related to revenue and spending. Additionally, there remain a subset of Democratic Senators that are concerned about the size and scope of this legislation. Given that all 50 Democratic Senators must vote in favor of the bill for it to pass, it is possible that the total funding levels will need to be reduced. These negotiations are ongoing.

Stay tuned, **your efforts will continue to be critical** as we work together to secure these essential funding increases for Older Americans Act programs and other critical infrastructure supports.

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