

## Caregiver Support – Statewide Call Advocacy Update 11-26-24

### State

#### 2025-2026 State Legislature

##### Election Results

Preliminary results from the General Election indicate in the 2025-2026 state legislature, Republicans will hold 55% of the seats in the Senate and Assembly and Democrats will hold 45% of the seats in each house.

There will be four new faces in the state Senate and an additional four Senators will be joining as former Assembly Representatives or will be serving a new district because of redistricting. In the Assembly, there will be 29 new Assembly Representatives and 33 Representatives who will be serving a new district, came from the Senate, or are former state legislators.

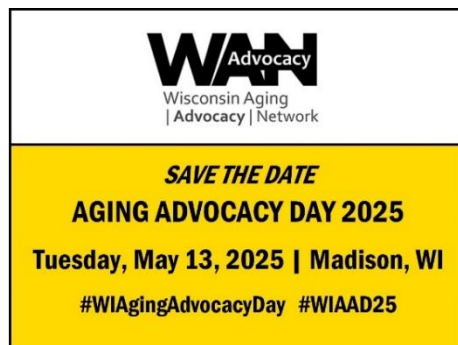
##### State Budget 2025-2027

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) has identified 10 priorities in need of funding in the 2025-2027 state budget. The list of priorities includes funding for: ADRCs, additional positions at the Board on Aging and Long Term Care, strategies addressing the direct care workforce shortage, the Elder Benefit Specialist program, elder justice programs, Guardianship Support Center, healthy aging grants (fall prevention), housing supports, home-delivered meals, and transportation.

To be more effective in our advocacy, we recognize the need to prioritize our funding requests. WAAN members have been asked to rank the priorities from their highest to lowest priority based upon the following criteria for each request:

1. How significant is the **impact** on people’s lives if this issue can be addressed?
2. How **central** is the issue to other needs? Will resolving this issue help resolve other issues too?
3. How **feasible** is it that we can meaningfully contribute to addressing this issue? Is it winnable? In the current environment?

##### Ageing Advocacy Day 2025 – Save the Date



## Federal

### 119<sup>th</sup> Congress (2025-2026)

#### Election Results

November's General Election resulted in some significant changes at the federal level. On Jan. 20, 2025, former President Trump will become the 47th President of the United States. The makeup of the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress differs from the current Congress, as the Senate Majority has changed from Democrat to Republican. The House Majority will remain Republican. The same political party now controls the executive branch of the federal government, as well as both chambers of Congress (this is referred to as a governing trifecta).

One new member will join Wisconsin's Congressional delegation for the remainder of this year and next session, Rep. Tony Weid was elected to represent Wisconsin's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (replacing Rep. Gallagher who resigned earlier this year).

#### Older Americans Act (OAA) – Appropriations & Reauthorization

##### Older Americans Act (OAA) – FFY 2025 Budget Update

In late September, Congress passed a **Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government funded until Dec. 20, 2024**. On Fri, Sept. 28, President Biden signed the CR, which keeps federal agencies and programs funded at fiscal year (FY) 2024 levels, into law.

As a refresher, the House and Senate released their FY 2025 proposed bills over the summer with the House bill including increases to OAA Title III B, III E and Title VI but with cuts to other key aging programs (OAA Title III C1 and C2 Nutrition Services programs, Adult Protective Services and the OAA's Title V, the Senior Community Service Employment Program). The Senate bill rejected House-proposed cuts and included level-funding for OAA programs. See USAging's [appropriations chart](#) for details.

Passage of the CR buys Congress more time to negotiate FY 2025 appropriations. **Our goal remains to keep the House increases to OAA Title III B, III E and Title VI, with the Senate's better recommendations for the other priorities in the final bill.** The expiration of pandemic funding, cuts in funding to the OAA Nutrition Program in Federal Fiscal Year 2024, elevated gas and food prices, and shortages of volunteers, have placed significant financial strain on the national network of senior nutrition programs. **Recently, 65 national organizations wrote to House and Senate leaders regarding the urgent need for emergency supplemental funding for senior nutrition programs. They requested Congressional leaders prioritize \$200 million in emergency supplemental funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program to address mounting wait lists for Meals on Wheels services.** The additional funding would enable senior nutrition programs to provide nearly 75 million additional meals and serve approximately 650,000 more older adults in need. Stay tuned, as our national partners will be contacting us in the future to join their advocacy efforts.



## **OAA Reauthorization**

After several months of quiet negotiations between the House and Senate OAA committees, and intensive lobbying by our national partner (USAgings), **next week, the Senate will attempt to advance the OAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The House is expected to follow suit quickly.**

When the Senate returns to Capitol Hill next week, it is anticipated that **they will advance an amended OAA reauthorization bill** that reflects negotiations between the Senate and House committees with jurisdiction over OAA. USAgings has learned that the Senate intends to “hotline” the bill immediately after the Thanksgiving recess. This means that Senators are informed that leadership intends to move the bill under a process reserved for non-controversial legislation—then Senators are given a short period of time during which to object to use of that “unanimous consent” process. If no Senators object to advancing the bill under that process, then the bill can move quickly to the floor. Such unanimous consent bills don’t require much Senate floor time and are often dealt with in batches when the Senate isn’t focused on more high-profile, recorded-vote measures.

Despite this promising news, **your advocacy is needed to get the bill across the finish line!** Please use the email template on the next page to contact Senator Baldwin and Senator Johnson and urge them to support the OAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

### **Take Action Now**

1. Using the template email below, **send an email to Senators Baldwin and Johnson requesting their support of the OAA Reauthorization Act of 2024!** Be sure to customize it to your agency/community. Send your email to their DC and district offices (you can find the contact information on pages 1 and 2 of this [document](#)).

Email Template to Your Senators. Note, areas with yellow highlighting require customization.

Dear [Senator Baldwin or Senator Johnson]:

On behalf of [AGENCY NAME] in [AGENCY LOCATION AND STATE], we are writing to urge you to support advancing the bipartisan Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 (S.4776), which we expect to be considered by the Senate in early December.

The bipartisan Senate bill, amended with the House’s input, includes critical updates to the law that help agencies like ours better serve older adults and their family caregivers. Because the Act expired in September, it’s imperative that Congress act quickly this year to ensure the continued health and well-being of the 11 million older adults and family caregivers who receive OAA services in communities across the country.

Sincerely,

[NAME, affiliation, address, etc.]

- 2. Engage your provider network.** Urge your vendors/providers, advisory board members and other important stakeholders to send their own emails to your state’s Senators. Please do all you can to amplify the message and engage others who understand the value of OAA in their community! Forward this Alert to your networks or edit it to be best received by your agency’s advocates. **Your advocacy will help to ensure the OAA is reauthorized before the new year!**

### Caregiver Nation Summit 2024

Last week, Wisconsin caregiver advocates Kristin Voss, Beth Fields, Bryn Ceman and Janet Zander traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in Caregiver Nation Summit 2024. The event brought together leaders, advocates, and family caregivers who drive real change for the caregiving community. The event included a trip to Capitol Hill so advocates could meet with Members of Congress and fight for policies that will support America’s 53 million family caregivers. Members of Congress were urged to act on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, a critical step to provide the recognition, resources, and support caregivers so deeply deserve.

It’s time to show we value and support family caregivers in our society and to ensure they receive the assistance they need to care for their loved ones without sacrificing their own health and well-being. Wisconsin’s participants were proud to stand with advocates from across the country to make a real impact and drive change for family caregivers.

