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March 2016

House Passes Older Americans Act Reauthorization

The Older Americans Act (OAA) received unanimous support when the U.S. House of Representatives on March 21 passed an amended version of bipartisan legislation that cleared the Senate in July, putting reauthorization on a path toward becoming law.

While House passage of the amendment is a critical step and a major milestone, the Senate must now approve the changes that were included in the House bill. Approval is expected in April following the Senate's spring recess, and the legislation will then go to President Obama for his signature.

The three-year reauthorization bill will provide stability for OAA programs through 2019.

The OAA was signed into law in 1965 as the primary vehicle for organizing, coordinating and providing community-based services that make it possible for older adults to continue to live independently in their homes and communities. They include nutrition programs, including home-delivered meals and congregate dining; assistance in the home; transportation; adult protective services; and assistance for family caregivers.

AgeOptions has joined other advocates such as the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) working for reauthorization over the past five years. "To see an OAA reauthorization package move through the House is a thrilling milestone that puts us much closer to ensuring that OAA programs will continue to support older adults aging in place and enable them to remain living independently in their homes and communities for as long as possible," n4a CEO Sandy Markwood said. Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president, characterized the congressional action as a respite from his consistent advocacy related to the Act for years.