



Reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) in the 114th Congress

The Older Americans Act, a vital program to America's seniors, has not been reauthorized since it expired in 2011. We urge Representatives to take up S.192, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act, in the House of Representatives and reauthorize the OAA.

Background: The Older Americans Act (OAA), originally passed in 1965, **improves the quality of life for seniors in need** and funds home and community-based services through Jewish family and vocational service agencies and Jewish Community Centers. OAA supports services such as adult day care, case management, congregate and home-delivered meals, elder abuse prevention, family caregiver support, mental and behavioral health counseling referrals, and transportation.

The OAA's **reauthorization expired in 2011**, and Congress has not yet passed legislation to address this. Reauthorization is a crucial process that allows Congress to update and improve upon existing laws. The following overviews some of the needed changes to OAA:

- Requirement for the Administration on Aging to consult with organizations serving Holocaust survivors and issue guidance to states on outreach to the survivor population for OAA programs.
- Improvements to nutrition services (meals) provided in senior centers and delivered to seniors' homes to promote well-being and reduce social isolation.
- Technical assistance and support for multipurpose senior centers including best practices for modernization and the promotion of intergenerational models.
- National Family Caregiver Support Program to assist caregivers who pay a high price physically, socially, emotionally, and financially to care for loved ones.
- Training and best practices to respond to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- The Senior Community Service Employment Program to train and place low-income adults, age 55 years and older, to work for community service programs.

It is estimated that **one in five older adults, around 11 million people, receive services from an OAA program**. Additionally, according to a recent Pew Research Center report, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," **24% of American Jewish adults are age 65 or older**, compared with 18% of the general *adult* population. As such, AJFCA and its affiliated agencies providers greatly value the programs funded by OAA and support its speedy reauthorization.

Proposed Legislation: On July 16, 2015, the Senate passed S.192, the Older Adults Act Reauthorization Act. This bill now awaits the House's consideration. In the 114th Congress, the House has not yet introduced S.192 or any other companion bill that would reauthorize OAA.

The Senate-passed S.192 includes language regarding Holocaust survivors that AJFCA fought to include. Here is the text:

SEC. 10. GUIDANCE ON SERVING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

(a) IN GENERAL.—Because the services under the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) are critical to meeting the urgent needs of Holocaust survivors to age in place with dignity, comfort, security, and quality of life, the Assistant Secretary for Aging shall issue guidance to States, that shall be applicable to States, area agencies on aging, and providers of services for older individuals, with respect to serving Holocaust survivors, including guidance on promising practices for conducting outreach to that population. In developing the guidance, the Assistant Secretary for Aging shall consult with experts and organizations serving Holocaust survivors, and shall take into account the possibility that the needs of Holocaust survivors may differ based on geography.

(b) CONTENTS.—The guidance shall include the following:

(1) How nutrition service providers may meet the special health-related or other dietary needs of participants in programs under the Older Americans Act of 1965, including needs based on religious, cultural, or ethnic requirements.

(2) How transportation service providers may address the urgent transportation needs of Holocaust survivors.

(3) How State long-term care ombudsmen may address the unique needs of residents of long-term care facilities for whom institutional settings may produce sights, sounds, smells, emotions, and routines, that can induce panic, anxiety, and retraumatization as a result of experiences from the Holocaust.

(4) How supportive services providers may consider the unique needs of Holocaust survivors.

(5) How other services provided under that Act, as determined by the Assistant Secretary for Aging, may serve Holocaust survivors.

While OAA's funding has continued despite its expiration, **AJFCA strongly supports reauthorization as it provides an opportunity for much needed improvements.** The bill passed by the Senate represents years of bipartisan work to create legislation that helps older adults live longer with independence and dignity.

As America's older adult population continues to rapidly grow, the OAA must be strengthened and improved. **Therefore, we urge Representatives to introduce a companion bill or to consider S.192 and reauthorize the OAA before the end of the 114th Congress.**

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