



August Recess Action Alert

APPROPRIATIONS

Heading into the August recess, House and Senate Appropriators completed consideration of all 12 annual Appropriations bills. When Congress returns in September, however, we expect that finalization of the bills will be delayed as both chambers struggle to reach agreement on overall spending levels and other politicized policy issues that have stymied the process. As in past years, where similar appropriations gridlock has occurred, we expect that Congress will enact a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the Federal government operating through November or December followed by Congress enacting either a final omnibus (catch-all) spending bill or a year-long CR (which would lock in funding and program decisions established for the previous fiscal year (FY 2015)). The following are Appropriations programs we have played a particular role in supporting and which will require additional engagement as the appropriations process moves forward this fall.

The Holocaust Survivor Assistance Fund: In Fiscal Year 2015, Congress established this five-year public-private project within the Labor-Health and Human Services Appropriations bill. The project, located within the Administration for Community Living will advance “Person-Centered Trauma Informed” supportive services to assist aging Holocaust survivors to live independently, with safety, security and improved quality of life. There are an estimated 130,000 Survivors living in the United States, many of whom live in poverty and struggle to meet basic needs for housing, food, healthcare and transportation. This population also faces high rates of depression, anxiety, social isolation and other afflictions associated with their Holocaust experiences. The model and lessons learned through this project will have broader applications to benefit other aging populations that also face trauma-induced challenges. In FY 2015, Congress appropriated \$2.5 million to launch the program. For FY 2016, the House Labor-Health and Human Services Appropriations bill includes an additional \$2.5 million to fund Year Two of the project. The Senate bill, however, does not include funding for the project. ***Please urge your Senators and Representatives to support inclusion of the House funding level of \$2.5 million in the final appropriations for the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Fund.***

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP): Since 1983, the EFSP program has remained a unique public-private partnership to help prevent individuals and families in emergency economic crisis from falling further into chronic homelessness, hunger and related privations. The program supplements nearly 10,000 public and nonprofit community-based human services providers located in as many as 2,500 cities and counties across the country. The funds are disbursed locally, based on local assessments of need, and administered with the help of a national board composed of leading charitable organizations, of which The Jewish Federations of North America is a founding member. Since FY2011, the EFSP program has lost 45% of its funding, as part of the severe budget constraints Congress has placed on domestic discretionary programs (reducing the program’s annual budget from \$200 million to \$120 million). This year, the Senate Homeland Security Appropriations bill includes an additional \$20 million cut to EFSP, while the House bill maintains current funding at \$120 million. ***Please call on your Senators and Representatives to support inclusion of the House funding level of \$120 million in the final appropriations for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.***

AUTHORIZATIONS

Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization: We urge the House to immediately pass S. 192. In July, the Senate passed S. 192, the bipartisan reauthorization of the Older Americans Act which includes language supportive of Holocaust survivors. This legislation makes modest improvements to the previous OAA, which expired in 2011. Lasting for 3 years, the OAA reauthorization includes compromise language on the funding formula, and as consistent with prior reauthorizations, does not establish funding caps and enables appropriators to set the funding levels. As we mark the 50th Anniversary of the OAA this month, we recognize that the OAA improves the quality of life for older adults in need, and OAA funds pay for home and community-based services through Jewish family and vocational service agencies and

Jewish Community Centers. OAA funds support 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. Through its reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, the Senate has recognized the unique needs of Holocaust survivors by requiring 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. ***Please thank your Senator for passing S. 192 and urge your Representative to support the bipartisan, Senate-passed Older Americans Act.***

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI): Social Security Disability Insurance is the earned insurance program that benefits 8.9 million workers who have become disabled before reaching retirement and 2 million of their spouses and children. If Congress does not act, SSDI will become insolvent by the end of 2016. This would result in all beneficiaries receiving a 20 percent across-the-board cut to their already modest monthly benefit. To fix insolvency issues in the past, Congress has undertaken a reallocation, a transferring of funds between the SSDI program and the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program. Though reallocations have been approved by Congress eleven times in the past, six for SSDI and five for OASI, on January 6, 2015, the House of Representatives passed a parliamentary rule that blocks any legislation reallocating funds from OASI to SSDI. While JFNA acknowledges that long-term, bipartisan solutions must be found to continue funding Social Security for future generations, disabled workers and their families must not be harmed in the process. ***Please educate your elected officials on this important issue and encourage them to pass legislation allowing a reallocation of funds from OASI to SSDI to prevent devastating cuts for 11 million Americans.***