

Congress: It's Time to Reauthorize the Older Americans Act

About the Older Americans Act

The Older Americans Act (OAA) is an important law that ensures aging well is a right, not a privilege. First enacted in 1965, the law establishes priorities and operations for key programs and services that help keep our nation's adults age 60+ healthy and independent. As the OAA is poised to reach its 60th year in 2025, it is more important than ever to protect and strengthen the law. This should include a significant increase in the authorization levels for these programs that have proven their success. A strong OAA reauthorization is key to ensuring a network of national, state, tribal, and community-based organizations that can plan for and implement programming to help all older adults, especially the most vulnerable, age with health and economic security.

How Congress Can Strengthen the OAA

The 2025 OAA reauthorization must center on a common purpose—to ensure aging well is a right for all, not a privilege for a few. NCOA's OAA reauthorization priorities provide a roadmap for Congress to address the needs of increasingly diverse older adults, support innovation and community-tailored solutions, and lead the charge for policy change to strengthen supportive services and senior centers, nutrition programs, caregiver support, healthy aging, elder rights, and economic security.

Senior Centers:

- Address lessons learned from the pandemic related to promoting equitable access to services, addressing diverse needs, and pursuing innovation in nutrition programs
- Ensure strong congregate settings in the community by reinstating a separate title for senior centers and updated language that retains the "special consideration" of senior centers as designated focal points and by strengthening support for multipurpose senior center infrastructure and services, while allowing for the flexible capacity for virtual connections
- Strengthen the authorization for modernizing senior centers
- Increase the authorization level of senior nutrition programs to allow for greater parity for both home-delivered meals and congregate meals approaches to be equally funded at scale

Title III-D Health Promotion:

- Double funding levels for OAA Title III-D to support the licensing, training, technology, and other costs required for implementation of evidence-based programs
- Expand the continuum of programs funded under the OAA to include those that are "evidence-informed"

✔ **Direct Care Workforce:**

- Strengthen authorities for sustained funding for the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center beyond five years to increase dissemination of state technical assistance and training opportunities to ensure an adequate and well-trained direct care workforce

✔ **Economic Security:**

- Modernize and increase flexibility in the determination of economic need with proven tools such as the [Elder Index](#) to ensure the local cost of living are addressed as future generations are expected to age with limited financial resources

✔ **Older Workers:**

- Update [SCSEP eligibility](#) to make it available to adults 50+
- Adjust income eligibility guidelines to at or below 200% of the federal poverty level to improve access for older workers struggling with financial security and employment

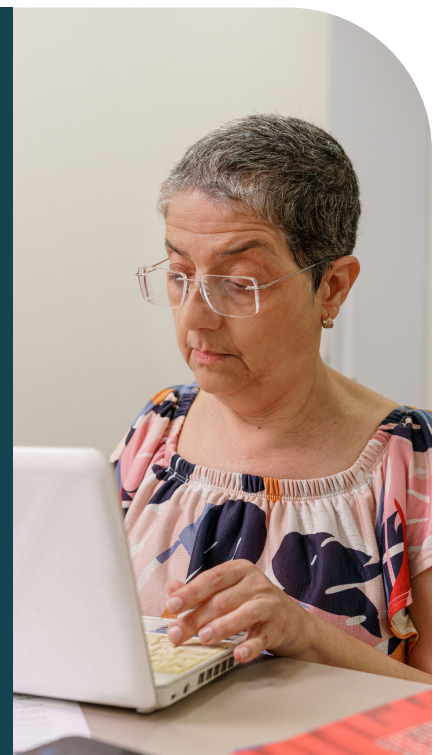
The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; the Senate Special Committee on Aging; and the House Education and the Workforce Committee are leading the reauthorization process in Congress. A bipartisan Senate task force has been convened and is soliciting input, including with a [March 7 hearing](#) at which NCOA testified. There should be continued support for this strong bicameral, bipartisan effort.

The OAA in Action: Woodbury Community Senior Center

Senior centers, recognized by the OAA as a community focal point, are one of the most widely used services among America's older adults. The Woodbury Community Senior Center in Litchfield County, Connecticut is no exception. The Center serves residents 60+ with a changing menu of activities that includes:

- A Creative Maker Space offering basic computer skills and digital design
- An intergenerational ukelele band, comprised of participants ages 6-92
- Congregate lunch in partnership with a local restaurant that supplies fresh local produce
- A dynamic balance class offered by a local dance company

As the director of the town's senior services explains, "We are truly member-driven in that participant input and feedback has a direct input on what we offer, and we always have a free cup of coffee and a warm welcome."



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