2016 Advocacy Tips and Tools

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About NCOA

Who We Are:
NCOA is a respected national leader and trusted partner to help people aged 60+ meet the challenges of aging

Our Vision:
A just and caring society in which each of us, as we age, lives with dignity, purpose, and security
About NCOA

Our Mission:
Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling

Our Social Impact Goal:
Improve the health and economic security of 10 million older adults by 2020
Communicating with Congress

- Congress needs and expects their constituents to contact them about issues they are passionate about.
  - Research shows that constituent visits to the DC and local offices have more influence when a member of Congress is undecided on an issue than any other advocacy organization or effort.

- Building a relationship with a member of Congress is an on-going process.

- Staffers can be key allies
Types of Meetings

- Advocacy
  - Requesting action on specific policy, legislation, appropriation

- Education
  - Sharing information on how a legislative proposal affects people & services in the community
  - Describing your expertise and how that could be helpful for the legislator in shaping policy or helping constituents

- Interactive
  - Organizing site visit, event with opportunity to meet seniors
  - Attending legislator’s town hall meeting, local forum
Best Practices – Advocacy/Education

- Keep it brief
  - Limit the issues to raise or requests to make
  - Plan a 15 minute conversation; use handouts to add details
- Tell them about yourself and your organization, and the important work you do for seniors in the state/district
- Put a face on the issue; personalize it and make it local
- Do your homework and prepare
- Request a concrete action when advocating
- Share contact info, follow up with thank you, propose opportunity to meet/converse in the future
Next Steps

- Keep the lines of communication open
  - Invite the legislator and staff to special events as well as regular meetings
  - Share news that affects the community and constituents
  - Offer to be a resource for caseworkers

- **Share** your Congressional interactions with NCOA
Hill Visit Scheduling

**Who:** 2 Senators and 1 Representative

**When:** Schedule appointments **NOW**

**How:**
1. [www.ncoa.org/ActNow](http://www.ncoa.org/ActNow) - or- Capitol Hill Switchboard (202) 224-3121
2. **Send a formal request**
3. Make a phone call: Ask to speak to the scheduler or person who deals with older adult issues
4. **Share with NCOA**
   - Helps us ensure meetings are with appropriate staffers
   - Enables us to provide logistics details

**What (to know):**
- Customary for offices to allow 30 minutes max for constituent meetings
- Leave at least 20 minutes between House and Senate appointments
- Be prepared to go through security similar to airport security
- Wear comfortable walking shoes
Advocacy at Home Tips

- Congressional recesses, or “District Work Periods” are prime times to schedule meetings or events with members of Congress.

- Visit our [Recess 2016 Advocacy Toolkit](#) for key dates and tips, such as:
  - Effective advocacy at home
  - How to get an elected official to attend your event
  - Top 10 tips for a successful visit to a member of Congress
  - 9 tips for town hall meetings
We urge you to focus on four major issue areas – aging services funding, reauthorization of OAA and EJA, Long-Term Care and Caregiving, and Medicare.

Mention other issues that are of importance to you, although we recommend no more than two, in order to ensure you have enough time to cover each topic and that your presentation is organized and cohesive. Remember, expect 15-30 minutes max for your visit.

Issue brief handouts will be available at ncoa.org by Mar. 15.

Action alerts will be live that week for home-based activity (ncoa.org/ActNow).
Congressional Environment

- Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 revised discretionary budget caps for FY16 and FY17, to eliminate the threat of sequester.
  - Some Republicans, mostly in the House, still want to pursue a Budget Resolution and cut mandatory programs to pay for the sequester relief (although it was already offset).

- President’s FY17 budget request
  - Getting little acknowledgement in Congress
  - Some increases for aging services, elder justice and caregiving slighted compared to recent years, cuts in Medicare and LIHEAP proposed again.
Congressional Environment

- Election year results in fewer legislative days
  - House expected to be in session 111 days; Senate: 149 days.

- Little optimism much legislation will pass
  - Must-pass bills: FY17 appropriations unlikely to pass as 12 individual measures as leaders initially pledged.
  - Debate – or political faceoff – over Supreme Court vacancy may bring Senate to a halt.
  - Could also mean another delay in finalizing bipartisan OAA and EJA reauthorizations.

- Election year: constituents need to be vocal!
Aging Services Funding

- Support proposed budget request increases:
  - $10 million more for OAA Supportive Services
  - $14 million more for OAA Nutrition Programs
  - $2 million more for Lifespan Respite Care Program
  - $14 million more for Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
  - $10 million in new funding to improve senior access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Aging Services Funding

- Support additional priority investments
  - $25 million for Elder Justice Initiative
  - $10 million for Falls Prevention
  - $16 million for Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME)
  - $59 million for State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)
  - $4.7 billion for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
The Older Americans Act (OAA) expired at the end of FY11. Bipartisan legislation (S. 192) passed the Senate in July 2015 and is still awaiting House action.

- 65 Representatives wrote to Education & Workforce Committee leaders urging action this year.
- Urge your Representative to pass S. 192 this year.

The Elder Justice Act (EJA) expired at the end of FY14 and bipartisan legislation (H.R. 988) is awaiting action.

- Bill introduced by Rep. King (R-NY) currently has 8 cosponsors.
- Urge Senators and Representative to pass EJA reauthorization.
Long-Term Care/Caregiving

- Medicaid HCBS Money Follows the Person Program
  - Successful bipartisan demonstration program that has assisted states with rebalancing from nursing homes to home and community-based services (HCBS)
  - Program set to expire in September 2016
  - Ask members of Congress to continue and make permanent

- Long-Term Care Financing
  - Recent bipartisan reports and recommendations
    - From the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Long-Term Care Financing Collaborative
    - Emerging consensus around principles and framework of policy options
  - Ask members of Congress to read reports and work with stakeholders and support legislation
Long-Term Care/Caregiving

- Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (S.1719 / H.R. 3099)
  - Would develop a national strategy to support family caregivers
  - Passed in the Senate
  - Ask House members to cosponsor and pass

- Caregiver Tax Credit
  - $6,000 tax credit to assist family caregivers with costs associated with caregiving
  - Concept has had bipartisan support
  - Ask Senators to co-sponsor the Americans Giving Care to Elders Act of 2015 (S. 879) introduced by Senator Klobuchar
Medicare Chronic Care Improvements

Medicare reforms are needed to better manage costs and improve quality for beneficiaries with multiple chronic conditions

- Medicare should improve access to evidence-based community and on-line programs, such as Chronic Disease Self Management Education and Falls Prevention interventions, which have been shown to reduce costs and improve quality. This can be accomplished through:
  - Targeted Demonstration Programs;
  - Patient-Centered Quality Measures;
  - Improvements to the Annual Medicare Wellness Visit; and
  - Partnerships between health plans and aging network community organizations.
Medicare Low-Income Improvements

- Low-income cost sharing assistance for Medicare beneficiaries is inadequate and must be fixed.
  - For those under age 65 not on Medicare, cost sharing help is available for those with incomes below 138% of poverty, with no asset test.
  - For Medicare beneficiaries, cost sharing help is available for those with income below 100% of poverty, with a strict asset test that unfairly penalizes retirees who saved.

- Urge your delegation to support legislation to “Fix the Cliff” for low-income Medicare beneficiaries.
Oppose Further Increasing Medicare Beneficiary Out-of-Pocket Costs

- Some members of Congress want to cut Medicare by further increasing out-of-pocket costs for beneficiaries. Tell them the facts:
  - People with Medicare already have average yearly out-of-pocket health costs of over $5,000.
  - Half of Medicare beneficiaries have incomes below about $24,000.
  - Growth in Medicare per person spending has been at historic lows.
  - Most of the Medicare cuts to help pay for the “doc-fix” bill passed last year came from beneficiary cost increases.

- Tell your Senators and Representative to oppose further increases in costs to people with Medicare. If we want to reduce Medicare spending, there are better ways to do it that will not harm those already struggling to afford the health care they need.
Additional Resources

- Advocacy Toolkit ([ncoa.org/toolkit](http://ncoa.org/toolkit))
  - Advocacy basics
  - Issue briefs & policy priorities
  - Understanding Congress
  - Congressional meeting & events best practices
  - Leveraging media
  - Issue-based toolkits: federal budget, nutrition & hunger, election-year
Join us!

- Visit ncoa.org and sign up for enews
- Follow @NCOAging on social media
- Donate to support NCOA’s work: ncoa.org/Donate
- Share NCOA’s free, trusted tools with older adults
  - BenefitsCheckUp.org
  - EconomicCheckUp.org
  - MyMedicareMatters.org