

Talking Points for Congressional Meetings

Effective advocates must give legislators and their staff persuasive information in a short period of time. To help make the most of the meetings you will have about Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization, USAging has developed the following guidance and talking points. **NOTE: This document is for internal use only. DO NOT share it with Congressional offices.**

Make sure your legislator understands who you are and what your organization’s role is in providing services to older adults.

- Most importantly, ensure that legislators understand what your agency does, who you serve and why the programs you administer are critical to their constituents.
- Be prepared to speak about current and future aging demographics in your legislator’s district or state.
- Address both the need for home and community-based services and how cost-effective these services are. Share personal stories/anecdotes about older adults who have been served through your agency’s programs.
- Offer to serve as a resource for case managers who often receive constituent requests for services. This will help make their jobs easier as they solve constituent problems.
- Share informational materials from your agency and USAging before or in the meeting.

Once you establish a rapport, pivot to the importance of supporting the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

- The OAA expires on September 30, 2024, so Congress needs to reauthorize (i.e., update and reconfirm its commitment to) the law.
- Educate legislators and their staffs about the OAA and what it means to their constituents. Make the connection between the local programs your agency provides and the federal Older Americans Act.

USAgings's Key Priorities for OAA Reauthorization

USAgings has identified seven major recommendations within our three goals for OAA reauthorization. ([See details on USAgings's recommendations.](#)) Depending on the length of your meeting, you may want to address one or two goals only. Be sure to review and understand the goals before your meeting and use the language below as a guide to help you get started.

GOAL 1: To serve more older adults in need of help to age well at home, Congress needs to significantly increase authorized funding levels for OAA, ensure AAAs' ability to contract with health care or use other private funding to serve more adults and meet their missions, expand access to health and wellness programs under Title III D to reach more older adults, and expand Title VI funding to support more services and robust training and technical assistance.

GOAL 2: The OAA must meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's older adults. Congress can support this goal in reauthorization by unifying and modernizing the Title III C nutrition program to reflect innovations and better meet the changing needs of consumers, including allowing new types of meals such as grab-and-go. As our agency continues to see high rates of social isolation among older adults and works to address the negative impacts, we ask that Congress authorize a national resource center to reduce loneliness among older adults, which would provide dedicated training and technical assistance to Aging Network professionals on building social engagement programs and activities.

GOAL 3: To ensure quality programming and services, AAAs must be able to maintain an adequate workforce, conduct quality assurance and oversight of providers, and successfully perform their planning and program development duties. We urge Congress to increase the administrative funding ceiling for AAAs administration of the area plan by two percentage points (10 percent to 12 percent). The current limit is no longer feasible due to many years of eroded funding and increased costs of doing business. These costs include personnel, liability insurance, information technology, data collection and reporting requirements.

Tips for Congressional Visits

In-person or virtual meetings with your members of Congress and/or their staffs are crucial to effective advocacy. Here are a few tips to make your visits successful.

Be Prompt

- Be on time for your meetings but know that you may be kept waiting. Be flexible to help ensure that your meeting gets off to a positive start!

Be Patient

- Be prepared to encounter last-minute changes.
- Treat everyone you encounter as a potential ally. Whether you meet with the legislator or junior staff, see your meeting as an opportunity to build relationships.

Be Prepared

- Have your talking points and materials ready for the meeting. But have a succinct pitch on hand in case your meeting is cut short.
- For joint meetings with other advocates, be sure to plan in advance who will say what.
- Share informative materials like short fact sheets, statistics on your PSA, etc. (and of course [please use USAging's advocacy resources](#)).

Be Persuasive

- Be clear about what you are asking for (e.g., OAA reauthorization and increased investments in its programs) and why it is needed.
- Know your audience. Consider a legislator's background and connection to the issues you are discussing.

- Use numbers. Make the case for why you need additional resources with current data and statistics. (How many individuals are on your waiting lists? Is that an increase over last year?)

Be Passionate

- Use anecdotes to bring your programs and services to life. Build on this with real-life examples of how your agency serves older adults.
- Passion is catching! Share yours!

Be a Professional Resource

- Ask the legislator or staff what you can do for them. If they ask questions you can't answer, promise you'll get back to them later. Also follow up with USAging's policy team at policy@usaging.org if there are any federal policy questions you can't answer or issues that we can help you address.
- Follow up after the visit. Send a thank-you by note or email and then suggest a next step that will take your relationship with the legislator's office to a higher level.
- Stay in touch. You now have at the very least, the name of a staffer who is tasked with following aging issues. When USAging sends out an *Advocacy Alert* asking you to call or email Congress, cc: that staffer or call them directly with your concerns.



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