

Good News!

Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 Passes Out of Committee

Success! Today, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015*, S. 192, passed out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee by a unanimous vote! This bill was introduced by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Patty Murray (D-WA), Richard Burr (R-NC) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT). It would update and strengthen the current Older Americans Act (OAA) and includes provisions that would aid long-term care consumers. We are pleased that Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) made a point of praising the long-term care ombudsman program's protection of nursing home residents and that she has signed on as a co-sponsor of S. 192.

Thanks to all of you who contacted your Senator on the HELP Committee- you helped make this success happen!

Next stop - the floor of the full Senate for consideration. Look for an action alert from us soon.

Why is Passing S. 192, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act*, Important?

The Older Americans Act authorizes programs and funding to benefit individuals aged 60 years or older in each state, including services such as the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, home and community-based services, nutritional and transportation programs, legal services, and many others. S. 192 would not only reauthorize these programs and services - which is critical for ensuring their continuation in the future - but also improve upon current law.

S. 192 includes provisions to strengthen the effectiveness of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which provides residents of long-term care facilities access to effective advocacy in order to ensure that they receive the quality of care and quality of life they deserve and are entitled to by law. These provisions include clarifying both organizational and individual conflicts of interest within the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; improving resident access to ombudsmen; better protecting the confidentiality of ombudsman information; ensuring that State Ombudsmen receive ongoing training; and, permitting ombudsmen, when feasible, to continue to serve residents transitioning from a long-term care facility to a home care setting. Furthermore, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 would take an important step toward better ensuring quality home care by directing the Assistant Secretary of Aging to develop a

consumer-friendly tool, when possible, to assist older individuals and their families in choosing home and community-based services.

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