

Members of the NAGE and NAGEC, the leadership of our organizations wants to keep you apprised of national developments in aging that may be of interest to GECs like the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Please see below. We're looking forward to seeing you at GSA in San Diego this November 14<sup>th</sup>.  
*President Bob Roush*



## **Senators Introduce Bill to Reauthorize the Older Americans Act**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19 – Comprehensive legislation was introduced today in the Senate to reauthorize and expand the Older Americans Act, the landmark law that supports Meals on Wheels and other essential programs for seniors.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging, and 14 co-sponsors introduced the bill, which provides basic necessities such as meals, home care and job training. The co-sponsors include Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), the No. 2 Senate leader, and Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Tim Johnson (D-S.D.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Mark Begich (D-Alaska), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Al Franken (D-Minn.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

“Millions of seniors today are hurting financially and we must give them the support they need to stay healthy in their homes and communities,” said Sanders. The Older Americans Act has saved taxpayer dollars, he stressed, by reducing health care expenses. “Investing in proper nutrition saves the government money by keeping people out of emergency rooms and hospitals and allows them to stay at home where they want to be.”

Originally enacted in 1965 along with Medicare and Medicaid, the Older Americans Act was the first initiative by the federal government to provide comprehensive assistance to seniors. With 10,000 Baby Boomers turning 65 every day and with the worst economic downturn since the 1930s, help for seniors is needed now more than ever.

Mikulski said, “I believe that ‘Honor Thy Father and Mother’ is a good commandment to live by and a good policy to govern by. That’s why I’m fighting to improve the Older Americans Act to better serve our seniors. Through these improvements, we are working to honor the responsibilities we have to our elderly. We must commit ourselves to meeting the needs of our growing and changing senior

population and their caregivers. This bill ensures that the services our seniors need are available to help them live more independent and active lives.”

“As Vermont’s population ages, we must ensure that seniors have the support they need to continue to lead healthy and productive lives,” Leahy said. “This renewal bill offered by Sen. Sanders will help achieve that goal by offering continued federal support for such vital efforts as nutrition programs, home care, coordination of long-term care and health care, job training and legal services.”

“For almost five decades, the Older Americans Act has been the bridge to independence for millions of older Americans, persons with disabilities and their families. If this law isn’t funded, renewed and updated to reflect the challenges seniors face today, the progress we’ve made will be at risk and seniors will lose the services they depend on,” said Kerry.

“With our senior populations rapidly expanding, reauthorizing the Older Americans Act is needed now more than ever,” said Begich. “The bill delivers essential services to our seniors while saving taxpayer dollars, allowing them to maintain their independence and keeping them safe from potential elder abuse.”

Blumenthal said, “The Older Americans Act is critical to seniors because it supports nutrition, housing and social services programs in Connecticut and across the country. Particularly important, this measure is a vital tool in the fight against elder abuse, which requires better screening and reporting so we can end this scourge. I fully support the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, and I am committed to doing all I can to help our nation’s seniors.”

“Seniors deserve high quality care that keeps them healthy and safe,” said Klobuchar. “This important bill contains my provisions to protect seniors from bad actors who could take advantage of them and reduce the burdens on families who are caring for their loved ones.”

Gillibrand, a member of the Senate’s Special Committee on Aging, said, “When seniors stay in their homes and maintain their independence, they live longer, healthier, happier lives, and taxpayers save millions. From opportunities to continue living independently, to access to better nutrition, empowering our seniors with better financial literacy and protecting them from abuse, these are the priorities I will be fighting for to ensure the Older Americans Act works for New York’s seniors.”

Among the new programs for seniors and their families, the legislation would authorize funding for the coordination of dental care to low-income older Americans, focus more on economic security and provide special assistance to veterans, Holocaust survivors and LGBT seniors. The legislation also includes increased support for family caregivers and would make gerontologists and geriatricians eligible for the National Health Services Corps.

Under another initiative, the Bureau of Labor Statistics would be required to improve how it calculates inflation to more accurately reflect seniors' out-of-pocket expenses for health care and prescription drugs. A cost-of-living measure tailored to the real-world expenses of seniors could be used to make more accurate annual adjustments in Social Security benefits, for example. The Alliance for Retired Americans said that the provision in the bill is "vital to the health and economic security of millions of older Americans and their families."

To see the bill, go to: <http://www.sanders.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/091912-OAA.pdf>

**Contact: Michael Briggs (202) 224-5141**