



AARP

2019 Federal Legislative Priorities

AARP[®]
Real Possibilities

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On behalf of our 38 million members and other older Americans, AARP's legislative goals in 2019 are focused on protecting and strengthening Medicare and other health care coverage, lowering prescription drug prices, supporting family caregivers, maximizing the independence of older adults, helping people who are 50 and older to lead healthier lives, securing Social Security long-term solvency and adequacy, improving retirement income security, and ensuring that individuals of all ages have the financial resilience to take control of their retirement.

HEALTH SECURITY

Medicare—Over 58 million Americans count on Medicare for their health security. AARP will continue to advocate for protecting needed benefits, increasing quality and value, and improving health out-comes. This includes strengthening the program for beneficiaries through expanded coverage for needed services and protection from excessive costs. Moreover, we will continue to oppose any changes that weaken the Medicare guarantee or shift more risk and costs to older Americans.

Affordability of Prescription Drugs—High and rising prescription drug prices are a key priority for AARP. Older Americans use an average of 4.5 medications a month, often on a chronic basis. We will continue to advocate for solutions that help to reduce drug prices – not just simply shift costs to other payers. We will continue to advocate for Medicare negotiation authority, greater access to low-cost generics, improved competition, lower out-of-pocket costs, and greater transparency in drug pricing and information for consumers. We will also continue to advocate against any rollback of the recent Medicare Part D donut hole improvements.

Family Caregivers—Family caregivers provide \$470 billion in unpaid care annually to adult loved ones, face daily challenges, and need recognition and support. AARP endorses the development and implementation of a national strategy to support family caregivers as proposed in the recently enacted Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act; endorses the Credit for Caring Act that provides a new, non-refundable federal tax credit of up to \$3,000 to eligible working family caregivers to help

address the financial challenges of caregiving; supports the reauthorization of caregiver support and respite programs; and encourages members of Congress to join the Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus.

Medicaid—AARP will continue to advocate to protect individuals and families served by the Medicaid program, particularly the elderly and persons with disabilities. AARP supports enacting policies that will allow more individuals to receive home and community-based services. In addition, AARP opposes efforts to block grant or cap Medicaid funding that will endanger the health, safety, and care of millions of individuals who depend on the essential services provided through this program.

The Affordable Care Act—AARP supports critical aspects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that address health care priorities that are important to all Americans age 50 and older, including: providing access to affordable quality coverage; preventing insurers from engaging in discriminatory practices based on age or pre-existing conditions; lowering prescription drug costs; providing new incentives to expand home and community-based services; and strengthening efforts to fight fraud, waste, and abuse. AARP will continue to fight for commonsense bipartisan solutions that will strengthen the law and against proposals that will increase costs and reduce access for older Americans.

Older Americans Act—The Older Americans Act (OAA) supports a wide range of social services and programs for individuals aged 60 years or older. With authorization set to expire in September, AARP will advocate to ensure that the law maintains critical service and information roles, and promotes greater responsiveness to the

needs of older Americans. Invaluable programs under the Act include: home delivered and congregate meals (i.e. Meals on Wheels), elder abuse protection programs, family caregivers training and support services that include preventative health services and transportation assistance, and part-time community service employment and training to low-income, unemployed people age 55 and older through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Social Security—Over 55 million Americans receive Social Security. For the majority of those individuals, Social Security is their largest source of income. At the same time, the benefits are modest, and the program faces a long-term financing shortfall. AARP recognizes that we need to update Social Security so that it can be financially sound while offering adequate benefits. A legislative debate – separate from any budget debate for this off-budget, self-financed program – is needed to address the long-term shortfall and ensure that workers and retirees receive the benefits they have earned. We will continue to seek common ground for legislative action for Social Security adequacy and solvency, and will advocate for common-sense improvements in the administration of the Social Security program.

Pension and Retirement Savings—Approximately half of the workforce does not have access to a retirement plan at work. AARP supports automatic savings initiatives that are easy for employers to offer and help workers accumulate retirement savings, with automatic enrollment, payroll deduction and portability as the key features. Many states have enacted retirement programs that include these key features, and AARP seeks federal solutions that will expand access to retirement savings while complementing those state programs. AARP also supports permitting small employers to offer pooled retirement plans to their employees, an expansion of the Saver's Credit to assist more modest income workers to save for their retirement, and coverage for part-time workers. Finally, we will continue our work to protect nest eggs from conflicted investment advice and hidden fees, which cost an estimated \$17 billion in retirement savings each year.

Combat Age Discrimination—AARP will continue to advocate on behalf of older Americans who face age discrimination in the workplace, often preventing them from fair consideration in hiring and promotions. A 2009 Supreme Court decision made it easier for employers to treat older Americans differently than it does other workers. Ten years later, it is long overdue for Congress to enact legislation, the Protecting Older Workers Against Age Discrimination Act, that would again level the playing field for older workers who have experienced age discrimination.

Medical Expense Deduction—AARP continues to advocate for making the Medical Expense deduction income threshold of 7.5 percent, which expired on 12/31/18, a permanent feature of the tax code. This deduction, which rises to an income threshold of 10 percent this year, provides important tax relief that helps offset the high out of pocket cost of acute and chronic medical conditions for older Americans, children, and individuals with disabilities.

Funding for Key Programs and Services—AARP advocates for ongoing, programming funding as part of the annual federal budget and appropriations process, and has significant interest in several of the appropriation bills considered by Congress. For example, the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill represents more than a third of all discretionary spending, and governs spending for health care, employment, home energy aid and nutrition assistance, community service, congregate and home-based senior services and caregiving services, among others. These programs are critical to the health and well-being of older Americans.

Livable Communities—AARP advocates for improvements in infrastructure that promote healthy, livable communities and support aging in place. We urge Congress to expand broadband access for underserved populations, including rural residents, and to increase safe mobility options for older Americans.

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