



WASHINGTON UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2017

Advocacy Alert: **Tax Cuts and Jobs Act**

On November 16, the U.S. House of Representatives passed its tax reform bill, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. On Tuesday, November 28, the Senate Budget Committee approved its version of the tax bill.

The full Senate is expected to begin debate the last week of November with a goal of passing its version and reconciling the two bills for final passage and signature into law before the end of the calendar year.

Included in the House bill is a provision to eliminate the medical expense deduction, which allows taxpayers to deduct qualifying expenses above 10% of adjusted gross income. According to an analysis by the National Council on Aging, nearly 5 million taxpayers age 65 or older use the deduction to reduce out-of-pocket medical expenses, including costly nursing home care. The repeal could also increase Medicaid costs by accelerating the spend-down process.

Currently, the Senate version of the bill retains the medical expense deduction, among other differences with the House bill.

The House bill includes major provisions which could affect older adults, their families and service providers. These include:

- Lowering tax rate percentages.
- Doubling the standard deduction.
- Eliminating deductions for personal exemptions (dependents).
- Eliminating the estate tax.
- Eliminating the medical expense deduction.
- Providing an additional \$300 caregiver tax credit.
- Lowering the amount of state and local tax deductions that can be taken.
- Keeping current retirement savings initiatives.
- Keeping the current charitable giving deduction.

Both bills are estimated to increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, which could negatively impact future federal investment in Medicare, Medicaid, affordable housing and other programs that ensure the health and wellness of older adults and their families.

If you share our concerns about the impact of the proposed tax bills on older adults, please contact your Senators to let them know. Find your Senator at: www.senate.gov

S.178 Signed Into Law

S.178, the Grassley-Blumenthal Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act of 2017, was signed into law by President Trump on October 18. It is the most significant elder justice legislation to pass since the Elder Justice Act of 2010. It calls for improving data collection, training FBI agents on elder abuse investigations, and designating at least one Assistant US Attorney from each federal judicial district as an elder justice coordinator. The bill can be read in full at congress.gov.

On November 20, Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging and the Elder Justice Coalition hosted a webinar titled “Exploring the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act - Public Law No. 115-70 (S178)”. The webinar explored:

- the background of the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act
- the implementation of the Act
- tools for advocates

If you missed it, you can view the webinar recording at benrose.org/KPI.

Medicare Open Enrollment

You can help your nutrition, senior center, and other older adult program participants find lower co-pays, free wellness visits, new plans with the same doctor and better deals on prescriptions during Medicare Open Enrollment, which takes place now through December 7 for Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D. They can go to Medicare.gov to compare plans and enroll. Tell your participants to contact your local SHIP for questions. You can view Ohio’s OSHIP site locator at insurance.ohio.gov. You can also contact the **Benjamin Rose Medicare and Benefits Enrollment Center** at 216.373.1650 (toll-free 1.866.885.1650). If you’re outside Ohio, you can find a link to your state SHIP website at shiptacenter.org.

Not yet eligible for Medicare? The open enrollment period for health insurance marketplace (ACA) runs now through December 15. Visit HealthCare.gov for more information.

What Are Your Thoughts on the OAA?

The Older Americans Act (OAA) doesn’t get reauthorized until 2019—but that’s only just over a year away! The Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging and NANASP are starting to collect thoughts about what the OAA should look like in its next version.

To submit your ideas, visit benrose.org/KPI.

If you need a refresher on what’s currently in the Act, visit acl.gov.

Contact Us

We welcome your feedback!
Please share questions,
suggestions or concerns.

Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
11890 Fairhill Road
Cleveland, OH 44120
216.791.8000
info@benrose.org

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