



ADVOCACY UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2018

Advocacy in a Noisy Environment

Washington produces a torrent of information these days, and some would say it is downright noisy. Most of the information is factually based, some of it is intentionally fake, and almost all of it is presented with a point of view. Right now, a lot of information about federal budget proposals is simply confusing. We at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging would like to share with our readers what we are paying the most attention to, and why.

Partner Summaries

Our partners at the National Council on Aging have summarized the budget guidelines passed by Congress a week ago that covers two federal fiscal years (2018 and 2019), but are not yet converted into actual budget language for adoption. This summary can be found at ncoa.org/blog. Additionally, our partners at the American Society of Aging have summarized President Trump's budget for 2019 which can be found at asaging.org. Advocacy groups in Washington are communicating about both FY 2018 and FY 2019 budgets with their members and the public. They are very different, and to Benjamin Rose's advocacy team, their significance for advocates is also very different.

Benjamin Rose is a member of these organizations, which are sources that we consider to be factually reliable. Because of their reliability, and because they take our opinions into account in formulating their positions, we consider them to be partners in advocacy, a status we don't confer lightly.

Benjamin Rose Position

Readers need to remember that the Federal Government is operating on a Continuing Resolution, as no actual budget has been adopted for FY 2018. So, the Congressional Budget Resolution is for FY 2018 and FY 2019, and it represents the framework within which the budgets for both years will be developed from the perspective of Congress. President Trump had already sent a 2018 budget proposal to Congress, so he only needed to introduce a budget for 2019. The result is an unusual crossing of these budget documents at the same time.

As you may know, it has been common practice for more than a decade for Congress to ignore the President's budget proposal. And in this case, the President's proposal was sent to Congress after it had passed its own resolution. Therefore, the President's budget is widely viewed as not being under active consideration. It is, however, an expression of what President Trump believes should happen in the Federal budget if he could have what he wants. So, for the purpose of understanding the direction and philosophy of the Administration at this time, the President's budget is an important document.

For advocacy purposes, however, Benjamin Rose believes that spending energy on issues that are unlikely to be moved takes away from the effort to address the issues that can be moved. Setting priorities needs to include a pragmatic assessment of how much can be done in a given period of time, and the best sequence for those activities.

Viewed through that lens, it becomes clear that the Congressional Budget information is much more relevant to action in the short run. Benjamin Rose anticipates that "targets of opportunity" are going to be identified in consultation with our advocacy partners in the next week or so. We will be communicating that information to you, along with informing you how we will try to bring our voices to bear on the lives of the people we seek to serve most effectively.