



# Elder Justice Coalition

## 2020 Annual Report

*Prepared by Bob Blancato, National Coordinator; Meredith Whitmire, Federal Policy and Media Coordinator*

The Elder Justice Coalition is pleased to provide this annual report on our work in 2020. It was a very important and historic year for elder justice issues in DC, culminating with the end-of-year passage of \$100 million in emergency funding for Elder Justice Act programs primarily for adult protective services to respond to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Coalition worked closely with Members of Congress and their senior staff of both parties to secure this funding.

### Washington Advocacy and Education

#### Major Legislative Activities

Throughout 2020, the Coalition's focus was on the Elder Justice Act, which celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The strategy was twofold: to reauthorize the law and to secure additional funding. We provided ongoing and extensive support and input to both the Republican and Democratic staff of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee to facilitate introduction and passage of a bill to reauthorize the Elder Justice Act and provide funding for it; several bills ([S. 4182](#), for example) were introduced that would have done this.

The highlight of the year came with the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The bill provided \$100 million for the Elder Justice Act, including at least \$50 million in dedicated funding for adult protective services for the first time. It should be noted that these funds were tied to emergency pandemic funding.

For securing this funding, we commend the leadership of Chairman Richard Neal of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senator Charles Grassley of the Senate Finance Committee. The Coalition also acknowledges the important contributions of ranking Finance member Senator Ron Wyden as well as Reps. Rosa DeLauro, Suzanne Bonamici, and Peter King.

The National Adult Protective Services Association, an EJC leadership member, said of the funding, "We are thrilled that Congress has at long last dedicated funding to supporting APS workers on the front lines of protecting older adults and adults with disabilities victimized by abuse, especially during this pandemic."

Other 2020 activities included:

- For World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), Sen. Chuck Grassley introduced Senate [Resolution 621](#) to commemorate the date. The bill passed the full Senate by unanimous consent on June 23.
- The EJC has provided support and advocacy for “Edith’s Bill,” ([Senate Bill 3487](#)) which addresses the need for older victims of fraud to receive assistance and compensation through the Crime Victims Fund.
- The EJC was also a strong supporter of the Promoting Alzheimer’s to Prevent Elder Abuse Act ([S.3703/H.R. 6813](#)) which would provide training for law enforcement on working with victims of elder abuse who have dementia. The bill passed both chambers and was signed into law in December.
- In March, the Older Americans Act was reauthorized in a bipartisan agreement through FY2025. This includes Title VII, which provides funding for elder abuse prevention and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. The EJC provided a [statement](#) of support.
- We provided technical assistance to various congressional offices.
- We also provided technical assistance to the House Select Committee on the Coronavirus for a hearing they conducted.

#### FY 2021 Funding for Elder Justice Issues

Final funding for FY 2021 outside of COVID-19 relief funding included a \$1 million increase for the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title VII State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to address abuse in assisted living facilities (\$23.7 million total), level funding for ACL’s elder justice activities and Adult Protective Services (APS) activities (\$17.9 million total, with \$14 million allocated for APS and the Elder Justice Initiative), and level funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) (\$1.7 billion). No funding was appropriated for combating elder abuse related to the opioid epidemic, and no new funding was appropriated for Department of Justice elder justice programs.

- We submitted [testimony](#) to the House Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee asking for new funding for DOJ’s elder justice programs, which are currently being funded from existing money.
- The EJC worked with Sen. Blumenthal to develop a sign-on letter to appropriations leaders asking for \$25 million for the Elder Justice Initiative in ACL, and we also worked with Sen. Grassley to send a [sign-on letter](#) asking for more funding for elder justice programs in ACL and DOJ.

#### Other Federal Elder Justice Legislative Activity

Other elder justice bills introduced/voted on include:

- [S.Res.590](#), Senate Resolution designating May 15, 2020 as “National Senior Fraud Awareness Day.”
  - Status: Passed Senate with unanimous consent
- [S.149](#), [H.R. 2610](#), Stop Senior Scams Act
  - Status: Passed Senate, did not pass House before this session of Congress ended.
- [S.3824](#), Protecting Seniors from Emergency Scams Act
  - Status: Introduced in the House; did not pass before this session of Congress ended.
- [H.R.6750](#), the Senior abuse Training and Offense Prevention (STOP) Act.
  - Status: Introduced in the House; did not pass before this session of Congress ended.

## Other Work

### Member Communications and Webinars

- We sent out 25 EJC newsletters and alerts in 2020 to keep members up to date with the EJC and elder justice activities nationally.
- Our tweets received over 132,000 impressions and our Facebook posts were engaged over 32,500 times.
- We collaborated with the Alzheimer’s Association to present the webinar “Combating Elder Abuse in the Alzheimer’s and Dementia Community,” which was joined by Rep. Ted Deutch.
- We also collaborated with the National Health Collaborative on Violence and Abuse to present a virtual briefing on elder abuse.
- We provided informal assistance to the Biden-Harris campaign on elder justice and nursing home issues.

### Presentations

EJC National Coordinator Bob Blancato and EJC staff gave numerous presentations on elder abuse in 2020, including:

- 2020 Tamkin Symposium
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day virtual briefing
- National Adult Protective Services Association virtual conference keynote
- Arizona World Elder Abuse Awareness Day virtual conference keynote
- Networking in Aging virtual conference keynote
- GSA Annual Scientific Conference virtual session
- Journalists in Aging Fellows Program virtual session
- W4A virtual conference presentation
- Youth Senior Buddies virtual symposium session

## Media Interviews and Clips

During 2020, the EJC staff responded to and proactively contacted reporters on elder abuse topics. Some press mentions and interviews include:

- Forbes - Next Avenue: [How Congress Is Addressing Elder Justice in America](#)
- Forbes - Next Avenue: [Ways Programs for Older Adults In Need Are Adapting Due to COVID-19](#)
- The Hill - [A need for reauthorization of the Elder Justice Act](#)
- American Society on Aging - [Generations: Are Presidential Candidates Even Thinking About Aging?](#)

## Looking Ahead

In 2021, the Coalition will again focus its attention on securing both a full and multi-year reauthorization of the EJA and additional regular and emergency funding for its key programs, Adult Protective Services and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Coalition looks forward to working and building relationships with the new Administration which has publicly endorsed a reauthorization of the EJA and several important nursing home reforms. We will be especially interested in the appointments of Administrator of the HHS Administration for Community Living and the Department of Justice's Elder Justice Coordinator.

We expect to work closely again with the Elder Justice Coordinating Council.

We also will continue to work closely with the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress and its new composition, given the change to the Senate majority. Our focus will include but not be limited to the Senate Finance; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Appropriations and Special Aging Committees and the House Appropriations, Ways and Means, Education and Labor, and Energy and Commerce Committees.

We thank you for your ongoing support and wish everyone a happy and healthy 2021!