

**GWAAR Advisory Council & Board
Advocacy Update
October 2025**

State

- **SB 152 (financial eligibility for AFCSP) Signed into Law**

SB 152/AB 176:

- o **Protects Federal Funding:** Secures federal NFCSP dollars vital for caregivers.
- o **Supports Care at Home:** Makes resources like adult day care and home modifications available.
- o **Reduces Healthcare Costs:** Allows individuals to remain at home longer.
- o **Strengthens Family Support:** Ensures no family is left behind.



The federal Older Americans Act family caregiver support program requires a 25% match. Over 50% of Wisconsin counties use the state's Alzheimer's and Family Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP) program to meet the federal match requirement. Federal rules prohibited the use of income-based eligibility programs, such as AFCSP from being used as match, putting Wisconsin counties out of compliance with federal rules. Without this change to remove the AFCSP income-based eligibility requirements, federal funds essential to caregiver programs across the state were at risk.

On Fri., Aug. 8, Governor Evers signed SB 152 into law (2025 Wisconsin Act 21). This legislation removes income requirements for the AFCSP to align with the federal National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP). Removing income-based eligibility requirements from AFCSP protected up to \$3.5 million in annual federal NFCSP funding and ensured support remains accessible to low- and middle-income families. This legislation received strong bipartisan support from the state legislature, with one-third of state legislators signed on in support of this legislation. SB 152 did not specifically include an effective date; therefore, the bill took effect within a few days after it was signed (giving the Legislative Reference Bureau time to post the new bill language. The Wis. Department of Health Services is now working with AFCSP fund recipients to align program reporting and administration requirements with the new law.

- **AB 410/SB 410** - grants for falls prevention awareness and initiatives (Healthy Aging Grants)

Healthy Aging Grants fund **evidence-based community programs** like *Stepping On*, which are proven to reduce falls by 31%. These programs equip older adults with practical tools to reduce fall risk, manage chronic conditions, and maintain physical activity—significantly reducing the need for emergency medical responses and hospitalizations.

Healthy Aging Grants provide training, infrastructure, and program access that community partners need to address the root causes of **preventable falls**. These grants will:

- o **Reduce preventable injuries** that currently overburden our families and systems,
- o **Support collaborative local efforts** with public health and aging services, public safety, and healthcare organizations, and
- o **Promote dignity, independence, and health** for older adults across Wisconsin.

The number of falls emergency medical services (EMS) responds to are increasing by nearly 10,000 a year statewide and made up over 20% of all 911-related ambulance runs last year.

We need your help to get more state legislators signed on in support [AB 410](#) and [SB 410](#) and to encourage members of the state legislature's Senate [Health Committee](#) and Assembly [Health, Aging and Long-Term Care Committee](#) to schedule a hearing on the legislation.

Take Action:

Please consider taking the following action:

AB 410/SB 410 has bipartisan support in the state legislature. There are currently 24 state legislators (9 Senators and 15 Assembly Representatives signed on in support of this legislation. **To see if your state Senator and Assembly Representative are signed on as sponsors/cosponsors on the bill**, go to: [AB 410](#) . **If yes, please send them a message thanking them** for their support of falls prevention funding. **If not**, contact them and **ask them to support this legislation to help reduce preventable falls in Wisconsin**. Let them know how important falls prevention initiatives are to you, your family, and/or those you serve. Find your representatives at <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/>. For more information regarding Healthy Aging Grants, see the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network's (WAAN) [Falls Prevention Issue Brief](#).

- **Housing Bill Package**

Last week, Assembly Republicans announced a new housing package. The package currently includes seven bills but could include as many as 10 when finalized. On Sept. 30, the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate held a public hearing on 11 bills, including the bills released in the package last week. We are specifically monitoring the following bills:

- Assembly Bill 182 ([AB 182](#))/Senate Bill 178 ([SB 178](#)) - Relating to: changes to the low-income housing tax credit. The bill requires that the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), if possible, ensures that at least 35 percent of the tax credits it allocates each year under the program are for qualified low-income housing projects in rural areas in Wisconsin and removes the requirement that a qualified low-income housing project be financed with tax-exempt bonds. The Senate bill passed out of the committee with unanimous support and is available for scheduling for a vote by the full Senate. The bill does not include increased funding for low-income housing tax credits which is needed to address rising costs.
- Assembly Bill 449 - Relating to: local regulation of accessory dwelling units. This bill requires political subdivisions with zoning ordinances to allow as a permitted use at least one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on each parcel that is zoned for residential use or mixed use on which an existing single-family dwelling is located.

- **Election Bills Announced**

On 9/24, legislators held a press conference to announce elections bill proposals. A dozen bills were initially circulated for co-sponsorship, with more bills expected in the future. While there is disagreement between Republicans proposals and Democrats proposals, both parties are showing bipartisan support for open discussion of the bills. Among the bills are proposals we are monitoring related to absentee ballots, election official training, voting rights, polling place accessibility, and voter registration. The bills are out for co-sponsorship through Oct. 1. Stay tuned for more information as the bills are introduced and referred to committees.

- **Volunteer Driver Protection – seeking legislative sponsors**

This legislation would modify state law to protect volunteer drivers from insurance companies classifying volunteer driving as commercial activity (like livery services – taxis and TNCs). Wisconsin communities are feeling the effects of insurance practices that penalize volunteer drivers (nonrenewal, high-cost premium increases). A statewide survey of volunteer driver programs revealed 34% of volunteer driver programs lost volunteer drivers due to increased insurance premiums or denials of coverage. This bill would amend Wisconsin's insurance statutes to prevent insurance companies from increasing premiums or denying coverage *solely due to volunteer driving*. Transportation can function as respite care by allowing a primary caregiver a break while a trained staff member or volunteer to transport the care recipient to a day program, social event, medical service or other activities, providing both peace of mind for the caregiver and enjoyable experiences for the people receiving care.

- **Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services**

Earlier this month, four new Speaker's Task Forces were announced, including the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services. Representative [Pat Snyder](#) (Assembly Dist. #85) was appointed as the chair of this new task force. The remaining task force membership is not yet known but is expected to be announced in the coming weeks. In a meeting with Rep. Snyder last week, he indicated palliative care, aging at home, elder abuse and financial security for older adults, social isolation, and transportation were some of the issues the task force might consider, though he is interested in hearing what other task forces members might also wish to prioritize. Rep. Snyder said the plan is to hold several public hearings around the state in Oct. and Nov., with a goal of having bill drafts in Jan. 2026. More information will be shared when the additional task force members are announced. Watch for additional information regarding the dates and locations of public hearings. It will be important for the task force to hear from older adults and aging network professionals around the state regarding the challenges older people face as they plan to stay living in their homes.

Federal

- **Federal Government Shutdown**



The federal government shut down at 12:01 a.m. on the morning of Oct. 1, 2025, due to the lack of votes needed (60 in the Senate) to pass a short-term spending bill (or continuing resolution – CR) to fund the government through Nov. 21, 2025. Republicans in the Senate were 5 votes short of the votes needed to pass their bill to keep the government funded for another seven weeks. The Democrats proposal sought an extension of enhanced Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies (set to expire at the end of Dec. 2025) and new restrictions on the administration's practice of withholding federal funds. Both of the spending bills were rejected, leading to a partial shutdown of the U.S. government.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) expects the shutdown to impact 750,000 federal workers who will be furloughed (without pay) while others (who are deemed essential), including active-duty troops, air traffic control, and federal law enforcement, are required to work without pay. Congress has traditionally approved retroactive payment for these employees once the government reopens, but this does not prevent the immediate financial difficulties they face.

Approximately 60% of federal funding is mandatory spending and unaffected by a shutdown. Programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid (which have mandatory funding) continue because they are authorized by permanent law rather than annual appropriations. However, customer service wait times may increase and some administrative functions could be delayed. Funding for Older Americans Act programs and other social service programs, as well as other programs and agencies funded by discretionary funding; such as SNAP, national parks and museums, public health initiatives, and federal housing assistance programs, is paused or suspended (until a new funding bill is passed) because they rely on annual funding approved by Congress. The impact varies significantly by federal agency, as each government department has its own contingency plan.

It is unclear how long this shutdown will last. The extent of service disruption depends on the length of the shutdown, and which agencies are unfunded. The last shutdown, occurring in President Trump's first term, was a record 35 days from December 2018 to January 2019.

Stay tuned, additional information will be shared as it becomes available.

- **Older Americans Act Reauthorization**

In June 2025, Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization Act of 2025 ([S. 2120](#)), a bill aiming to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) for four more years. The OAA, the main federal law supporting programs for adults 60 and over, needs regular reauthorization to adapt to the needs of an aging population. Key provisions in this bipartisan bill include strengthening the [Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program](#) by creating a full-time National Director position and authorizing studies on program effectiveness, and improving the

[National Family Caregiver Support Program](#) to reduce barriers and include trauma-informed services. It also proposes establishing a clearinghouse for best practices and increasing funding authorization. The current proposal would extend authorization through 2029 and provide an 18% increase in funding authorization over four years. None of Wisconsin's Members of Congress have signed on yet, nor has any House companion bill been introduced. The last OAA reauthorization expired on 9/30/24.

- **Lifespan Respite Act Reauthorization**

The Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2025 was introduced in Congress to reauthorize the existing Lifespan Respite Care Program and ensure its continued funding for family caregivers. The bill expands eligibility by defining a caregiver as any "unpaid individual" and extends the funding authorization to fiscal years 2025-2030, providing continued federal support for respite services that help prevent caregiver burnout and improve the well-being of both caregivers and those they care for. [S. 830](#) (co-sponsored by Sen. Tammy Baldwin) and [H.R. 2560](#) were introduced this past spring (2025), but have not made much progress since introduction. The last reauthorization expired one year ago, on 9/30/24.