

**Remarks of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott**  
**Consideration of the House Amendment to S. 192, *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015***  
**(Older Americans Act Reauthorization)**  
**House Floor – Monday, March 21, 2016**

Thank you, M\_\_ Speaker. I rise in support of the legislation being considered today which provides for a three-year reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Democrats on the Education and the Workforce Committee have been committed to seeing this reauthorization through – particularly Ranking Member Rubén Hinojosa and Congresswoman Bonamici – and I want to thank them, and Chairman Kline and my Republican colleagues, for making this a reality.

As Ranking Member on the Education and the Workforce Committee, I have the privilege of working on legislation that affects Americans throughout their lives – from childhood into advanced age. The Older Americans Act is one of the many important laws that falls within the Committee’s jurisdiction. The Older Americans Act was first passed fifty years ago as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” to help older Americans live in dignity and stay connected to their communities by receiving essential social and nutrition services. Today, that commitment to our nation’s seniors is more important than ever. One in ten Americans over the age of 65 lives in poverty and older Americans are also working longer – some because they want to, but many because they need to, so that they can secure their financial futures in the face of retirement insecurity. The spectrum of services provided through the Older Americans Act – in conjunction with Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security – ensure that our nation’s older Americans are not left behind in their golden years.

The Pew Research Center reports that the elderly population is expected to double by 2050, and without meaningful investments in services for our seniors, too many Americans who worked hard all their lives will be left struggling in their later years. And unfortunately since 2009, Older Americans Act funding has dropped 7 percent.

Failing to invest in the Older Americans Act is bad for seniors and it’s bad for our economy. Providing our seniors with the health services, nutrition, and supportive services they need makes them less likely to suffer illness and injury, less likely to incur expensive hospital visits, and more likely to live independently. These investments bring dignity to the lives of our seniors and result in a significant savings of taxpayer dollars. Reauthorizing the Older Americans Act and protecting programs like Medicare and Medicaid, promotes healthy seniors and a healthy economy.

I am proud that we were able to agree on increased funding for these important programs and that we will continue to advocate for robust federal investment. Had our investments in these programs kept up with inflation or the growing population, we would be in far better shape. But thankfully, we can finally say that we are moving in the right direction.

I am also pleased that this law builds upon the bipartisan compromise reached in the Senate and makes needed improvements and updates to the statute. For example, this legislation includes

oral health screenings among disease prevention and health promotion activities that can be carried out under the Older Americans Act. We know that this will have a demonstrable and positive impact on the health of seniors across the country. The legislation also allows the long-term ombudsman program to serve all residents of long-term care facilities, regardless of age. The legislation protects and invests in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) that promotes gainful employment, community service, intergenerational collaboration, and socialization for seniors. With all these notable improvements, we can be proud that we are moving in the right direction.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey once stated, “The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life....” It is my hope that by protecting and enhancing the federal statutes that support our older Americans, we will pass this test.

I again want to thank my colleagues for their efforts in moving along this legislation. Thank you and I yield back the remainder of my time.