



For Immediate Release
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National Adult Protective Services Association Applauds
Re-Introduction of Elder Justice Act (S.795) in Senate
State Services Protecting Elder Abuse Victims To Receive First Ever Federal Help

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) welcomes the re-introduction of the Elder Justice Act in the U.S. Senate. The bill, sponsored by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), is a widely supported, bipartisan bill to address the growing problem of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older persons.

The Elder Justice Act is groundbreaking legislation that would create urgently needed federal support for struggling APS programs across the country. APS investigators, who operate under state law and funding in every state, are the front line responders to reports of elder abuse and abuse of adults with disabilities. In contrast to state child protective services, which are annually funded with billions of federal dollars, programs which protect vulnerable adults receive no federally appropriated funds.¹ With state budgets in trouble and without any federal mandates, APS programs are being slashed just as the number of seniors is increasing dramatically. This bill would authorize a very modest \$100 million for APS annually.²

“The Elder Justice Act will provide desperately needed help to state and local APS programs as they attempt to respond to ever increasing numbers of elder abuse reports. Not only is the population aging rapidly, but with tough economic times, more and more older persons are at risk of financial exploitation in particular,” said Art Mason, President of NAPSA. “When a senior loses their hard earned savings, it is not only devastating to them but often costs taxpayers as well, since the victim must then rely on public services for needed care.”

It is estimated that over two million seniors are abused every year, and at most only one in five cases is ever reported.³ Seniors are physically and sexually abused, severely neglected and financially exploited, most often by their own family members, trusted friends and personal caregivers. Yet to date, and despite three decades of hearings on the issue, the US Congress has failed to enact a comprehensive bill to address this growing crisis.

In addition to funds to states to help them provide protective services to extremely vulnerable adults, other important goals contained in the bill include better data collection and more research to understand the scope and nature of elder abuse. The Act also provides for needed federal coordination and oversight of elder abuse efforts across the country.

The Act’s comprehensive approach to study, investigate, respond, and prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation is very far-reaching and effective in its approach. NAPSA urges the Congress to swiftly enact the Elder Justice Act.

¹ Note: some states use some of their Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds for APS.

² It is estimated an appropriation at this level would save or create an estimated 1,700 positions.

³ Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation in an Aging America, National Research Council of the National Academies, Washington, DC, 2003.