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New AARP Poll Supports Bipartisan Congressional Family Caregiving Caucus Launched Today

Voters Want Lawmakers to Support Family Caregivers Who Face Stresses, Challenges

WASHINGTON, DC — Across political parties, more than seven in ten registered voters age 40 and older say Congress should improve resources for family caregivers who help their parents, spouses, children with disabilities and other loved ones to live independently. This and other findings from a [new poll](#) underscore the need for the bipartisan, bicameral Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus launched today by U.S. Senators Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) and U.S. Representatives Diane Black (R-TN) and Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM), co-chairs of the ACT Caucus. The Caucus will help bring greater attention to family caregiving and helping people live independently, educate Congress on these issues, and engage legislators on a bipartisan basis to help lead to solutions.

“With the launch of this caucus, we finally have a national spotlight we can shine on the value of—and need to support—family caregivers,” said AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins at the Capitol Hill event launching the ACT Caucus. “The fact that this caucus is both bipartisan and bicameral is significant and encouraging. It sends a message that members of Congress recognize that the issues facing family caregivers and the desire to live independently and with dignity are not bound by politics or ideology.” According to the new poll, more than two thirds of voters say they will be more favorable to members of Congress who want to improve resources for family caregivers.

Over 12 million Americans require assistance with daily tasks—such as eating, dressing, bathing, and transportation—as a result of physical limitations or cognitive impairments. This number is expected to more than double by 2050. At the same time, the vast majority (87%) of older Americans say they want to stay in their current homes and communities as they age.

To help older Americans and people with disabilities achieve the goal of independence, 42 million family caregivers provide over 40 billion hours of unpaid care, valued at an estimated \$450 billion in 2009, according to previous research. This amounts to about 90 percent of the care that enables older adults and people with disabilities to avoid living in nursing homes or other institutional settings.

The average family caregiver is a 49-year-old female taking care of a 78-year-old woman and provides 20 hours a week of assistance to their loved one.

The new AARP poll finds:

Of registered voters age 40 and older:

- 77% think that Congress should make it a priority to improve resources for family caregivers
- 68% say they would be more favorable to members of Congress who wanted to improve family caregiver

resources

Of those currently or previously providing family caregiving:

- 68% report using their own money to provide care for their loved one
- 64% report emotional stress
- 59% find it difficult to take a break from caregiving
- 58% find it difficult to balance job and family
- 53% find it difficult to exercise regularly

Of family caregivers and future family caregivers age 40 and older:

- 88% would find information about caregiver resources helpful
- 85% would find information about respite care helpful.
- 78% would find assistance with chores helpful
- 78% would find help with transportation to medical appointments helpful
- 77% would find general transportation assistance at least somewhat or very helpful.

"It would be a mistake to conclude that the stress, challenges and needs they experience represent caregivers' full experience," said Jenkins. "We know they overwhelmingly believe it is important to provide this care for their loved one, and have described this experience with words like love, home, quality, care, and family. Despite these challenges, family caregivers overwhelmingly (94%) say it is important to provide care for their loved one so they can live independently at home. Even among voters who are not caregivers, the majority (70%) believe this is important.

AARP commissioned the telephone survey of 1,200 registered voters nationwide, age 40 and older, to learn about their experiences with family caregiving. The survey data highlights results from residents interviewed between February 13th and February 19th, 2015. The data in the survey report was weighted by age and gender to reflect the United States registered voter population age 40 and older. The survey included both cell phones and landlines. The survey has a margin of error of +/-2.9 percent. A copy of the survey report is available at <http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/care/info-2015/national-survey-family-caregivers.html>

At the event launching the new ACT Caucus, four family caregivers, **Dr. Tobey Partch-Davies** of New Hampshire, **Don Schierling** of Colorado, **Chris Courington** of Tennessee, and **Marianita Gorman** of New Mexico told of the challenges they faced caring for loved ones.

Watch the ACT Caucus Launch.

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About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

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