The Elder Justice Coalition is pleased to provide this annual report on our work in 2019. It has been a very active year for elder justice issues in the nation’s capital, with both the legislative and executive branches of government demonstrating new interest and urgency in issues around elder justice. This includes significant work toward reauthorizing the Elder Justice Act and the ongoing work of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council.

In addition, the Coalition has been a featured presenter at a variety of conferences and forums, mostly outside of D.C., providing up-to-date information on national policy developments.

In 2020, the EJC’s priorities are to secure passage of an Elder Justice Act reauthorization and an Older Americans Act reauthorization, secure adequate funding for elder justice programs, and work collaboratively with federal agencies, especially the Administration for Community Living and the Department of Justice, to promote elder justice.

**Washington Advocacy and Education**

**Major Legislative Activities**

During this Congress, the EJC staff and its members have worked with Members of Congress and their staff in the development of policy and legislation to help end elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

- For nearly all of 2019, we had ongoing and extensive input with both the Republican and Democratic staff of the Senate Finance Committee to facilitate introduction and passage of a bill to reauthorize a new Elder Justice Act (EJA). In July, Bob Blancato testified at a hearing entitled “Promoting Elder Justice: A Call for Reform” which discussed a new Act. The EJC will be working to secure passage of a bill in 2020.
- The House Ways and Means Committee is also considering legislation to address elder abuse and a range of other aging-related issues, and Bob Blancato testified before the Committee at a hearing titled “Caring for Aging Americans” on November 14.
In October, the House passed H.R. 4334, the Dignity in Aging Act of 2019, to reauthorize the OAA for five years. This includes Title VII, which provides funding for elder abuse prevention and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. The EJC provided a letter of support.

For World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), Sen. Chuck Grassley introduced a Senate resolution to commemorate the date. He also gave a floor statement (also on video) about WEAAD and elder abuse, and called out the work of the Coalition. The bill passed the full Senate by unanimous consent on June 26. The EJC co-sponsored a congressional reception with the National Adult Protective Services Association in recognition of WEAAD.

The EJC has also assisted in the development of the Stamp Out Elder Abuse Act (S.1784, H.R.2719), a bill which would create a semi-postal stamp to fund the DOJ and ACL’s efforts to combat elder abuse. Letters of support from the EJC have been provided to the sponsors (Senate, House).

We submitted testimony to the Senate Special Aging Committee on “Fighting Elder Fraud.”

The EJC provided input and support in the development and introduction of the Guardianship Accountability Act of 2019 (S. 591, H.R. 4174) to address the need to make guardianships safer for older adults.

FY 2020 Funding for Elder Justice Issues

Another ongoing priority of the EJC is to secure adequate funding for elder justice programs, especially those created under the Elder Justice Act. To date, a total of $58 million in direct funding for Elder Justice Act programs, such as the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Elder Justice Initiative, has been secured.

Final funding for FY 2020 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 ($22.7 million total), level funding for ACL’s elder justice activities and Adult Protective Services (APS) activities ($15.9 million total, with $12 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 originally submitted testimony to the Senate and House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittees asking for $25 million for the ACL Elder Justice Initiative, $25 million in dedicated funding for Adult Protective Services, $21.7 million for the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, $20 million in additional targeted funding for the Ombudsman Program to address assisted living quality of care, no less than $1.7 billion
(level funding) for SSBG, and at least $5 million for the OAA aging network to address
the growing demand for a coordinated response to abuse linked to the opioid addiction
of family and caregivers of older adults.

- We also submitted testimony to the Senate/House Commerce-Justice-Science
  Appropriations Subcommittees 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.

**Regulatory and Administrative Activities**

- In January, EJC staff met with Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D., who serves as Assistant
  Secretary for Health and Senior Advisor for Opioid Policy, HHS, and ACL
  Administrator Lance Robertson to discuss the EJC findings regarding the increase in
  elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation tied to the opioid crisis and how the EJC could
  work with the Admiral’s office to address engagement of and support for the
  Administration of Community Living/Administration on Aging.

- EJC staff have been working with the Federal Trade Commission and other agencies
  on the issue of robocalls. We held a June webinar on robocalls and issued a
  statement supporting the Federal Communications Commission’s actions in
  February.

- The EJC praised the development by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
  (CMS) of a new consumer tool to help identify nursing homes cited for abuse. They have
  updated the information on the Nursing Home Compare website with a consumer alert
  icon next to nursing homes on the list that have been cited for incidents of abuse,
  neglect, or exploitation. EJC members have also commented positively on this CMS
  effort, including the Consumer Voice and other organizations.

- On December 3, Bob Blancato testified before a meeting of the Elder Justice
  Coordinating Council – their role, successes and challenges, and the state of elder abuse
  in our communities. He suggested that the Federal Emergency Management Agency
  (FEMA) should participate in the Council and stated that more public awareness needs
  to be raised on the issue of elder abuse.

**Other Federal Elder Justice Legislative Activity**

Other elder justice bills introduced/voted on include:

- **S.240**, the Taxpayer Identity Protection Act of 2019
  - Status: signed into law (included in the Taxpayer First Act)


- **H.R.1876**, the Senior Security Act of 2019
  - Status: Passed House, currently under consideration in the Senate

- **H.R. 1423**, the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal (FAIR) Act
  - Status: Passed House

- **H.Res. 328**: Supporting the protection of elders through financial literacy
  - Status: Introduced in the House and agreed to

- **S.149, H.R. 2610**, Stop Senior Scams Act
  - Introduced in the Senate and reported out of committee; introduced in the House

State Legislative Activities

- We have given support to California SB 314, which was signed into law in June by Gov. Gavin Newsom. Existing California law provides for the award of attorney’s fees and costs to, and the recovery of damages by, certain older adults when physical abuse and neglect have been found. This new law extends those remedies to cases in which the perpetrator is liable for abandonment.

- We have been working on an ongoing basis with the State Justice Institute and Council of State Governments on the implementation of the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act.

- We also wrote a [letter](#) in support of funding increases for the California Long Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Other Work

Member Communications and Webinars

- We sent out 18 EJC newsletters and alerts in 2019 to keep members up to date with the EJC and elder justice activities nationally.

- Our social media presence significantly increased; our tweets received over 151,000 impressions and our Facebook posts were engaged with over 60,000 times.

- On March 6, we hosted a “Financial Exploitation 101” webinar.

- On June 27, we hosted a webinar titled "Stopping Robocalls Once and For All." This was geared toward aging services providers and elder justice advocates and featured speakers from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

- On July 25, the EJC hosted a webinar entitled “Elder Justice: Prevention, Prosecution, and Best Practices.” This webinar focused on the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act and its implementation, with speakers from the EJC, Department of Justice, US Senate, and American Bar Association.

- We also have hosted a Twitter Chat on financial exploitation ([#FightElderFraud](#)).
Presentations
EJC National Coordinator Bob Blancato and EJC staff have given numerous presentations on elder abuse in 2019, including:

- American Society on Aging conference, New Orleans, LA
- Senior Corps conference, Washington, DC
- Taking a Stand Against Elder Abuse tribal conference, Fort Hall, ID
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day conference, Phoenix, AZ
- Cherish Our Kupuna conference, Maui County, HI
- National Adult Protective Services Conference, Denver, CO
- National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care conference, Arlington, VA
- The Gerontological Society of America, Austin, TX

Media Interviews and Clips
During 2019, the EJC staff responded to and proactively contacted reporters on elder abuse topics. Some press mentions and interviews include:

- CNN Headline News Network: Response to March 6, 2019 Nursing Home Hearings (video)
- Southern California Public Radio/LAist: LA County Is Reporting More Elder Abuse Than Ever Before
- Washington Post: How the opioid crisis is leading to elder financial abuse
- Maui News: Expert: Women age 75-80 living alone prime scam targets
- Milwaukee Courier: Raising Awareness on the Financial Impact of the Opioid Epidemic
- Gray Media/ABC 12: Stopping scams targeting seniors
- North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA): NASAA Members to Offer Resources to Help Investment Professionals Work with Clients Affected by the Opioid Epidemic
- Forbes - Next Avenue: It’s Time To Make The Elder Justice Act More Effective
- Maui News: Expert: Women Age 75-80 Living Alone Prime Scam Targets
- Forbes - Next Avenue: Curbing Elder Abuse: What’s Been Helping, What Is Needed
- Certified Senior Advisor (CSA) Journal: Elder Justice Coalition [organizational members only]
- American Association of Medical Assistants CMA Today journal: Justice for geriatrics/Defend patients against elder abuse [organizational members only]