

Who's Who in Congress: Elder Justice Policy

Elder justice is a bipartisan issue. For your reference, below is a list of selected members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives from both parties who have been influential in shaping elder justice policy and who continue to have an impact in this area. The list also includes a short introduction to key congressional committees that have jurisdiction over various types of elder justice-related legislation.

Key Senate Leaders in Elder Justice

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

As a member of the Judiciary Committee and the Special Committee on Aging, Sen. Blumenthal has been a champion for elder justice. He co-sponsored the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act (2017), which was signed into law, and sponsored the Quality Care for Nursing Home Residents Act (2021). He has also co-written letters on elder justice funding and co-sponsored World Elder Abuse Awareness Day resolutions.

Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA)

As Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, Sen. Casey has made elder justice issues a priority. Last Congress he sponsored the Nursing Home Reform Modernization Act (2021) and co-sponsored the Elder Justice Modernization and Reauthorization Act (2021). He also sponsored the Better Care Better Jobs Act, which has been reintroduced this Congress. He has co-led hearings on fraud and exploitation, wrote multiple reports on nursing home reform during COVID-19, co-sponsored the Older Americans Act reauthorization in 2020, and has co-authored the Aging Committee's Fraud Book for several years running.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

As former Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and the new Ranking Member on the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Collins has historically had a deep interest in elder justice issues. She co-wrote the Aging Committee's Fraud Book while on the Committee, sponsored the Senior Safe Act (2018), and co-sponsored the Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act (2020) (both signed into law), and co-sponsored the Older Americans Act reauthorization in 2020. She also led multiple hearings related to fraud and exploitation during her tenure as Chair.

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA)

As new Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee and former Chair of the Finance and Judiciary Committees, Sen. Grassley has been a key champion for elder justice. He helped secure the \$100 million in elder justice funding in December 2020's COVID-19 emergency legislation and was the sponsor of the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act (2017). He has worked on nursing home reform and recently pushed for further review of psychotropic prescriptions. He has co-written letters on elder justice funding and sponsored World Elder Abuse Awareness Day resolutions.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)

As former Chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and new Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Murray has been a long-time advocate for older adults, focusing on home and community-based services and protecting programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Older Americans Act programs.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL)

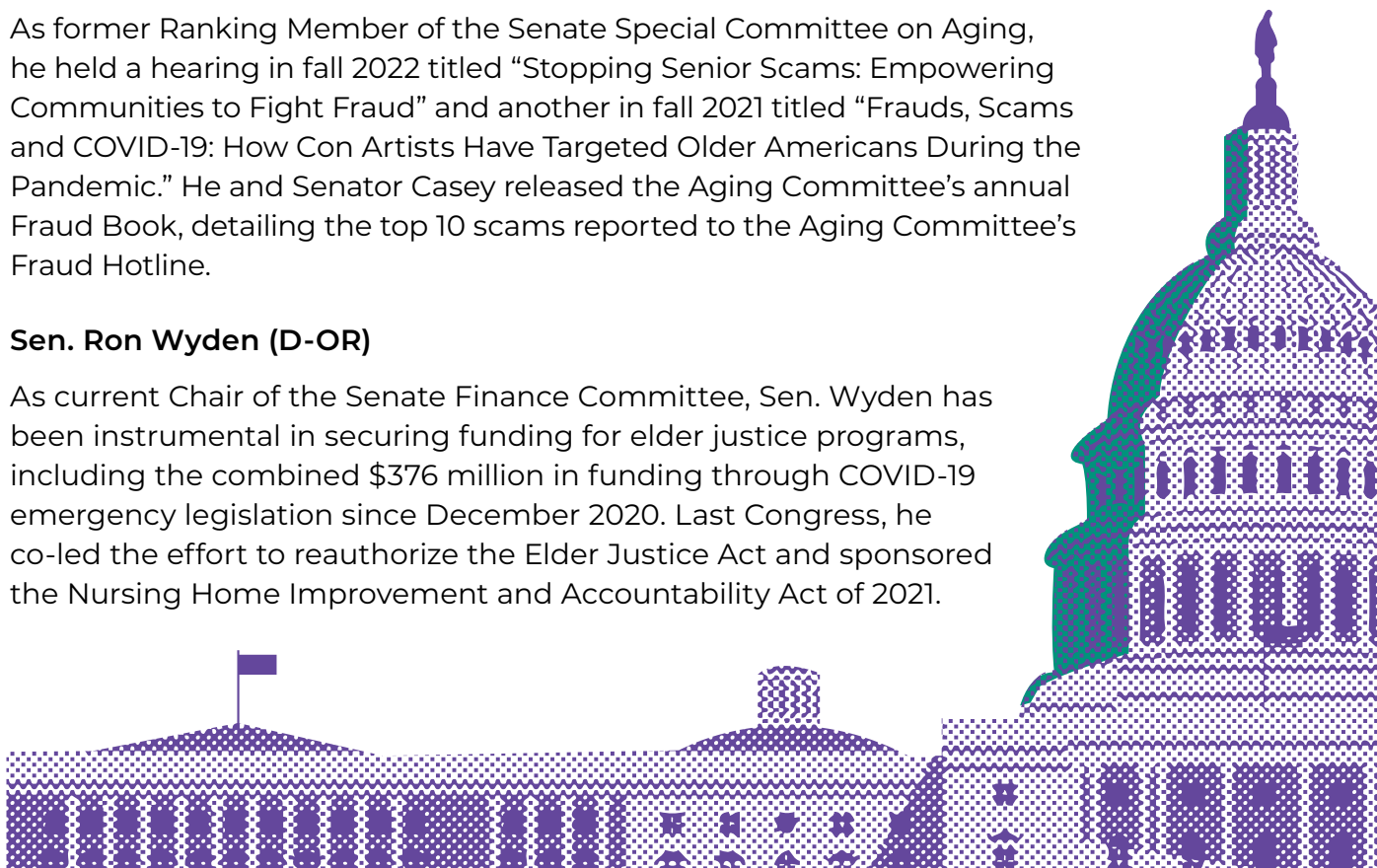
Sen. Rubio sponsored the Promote Responsible Oversight and Targeted Employee Background Check Transparency for Seniors (PROTECTS) Act (2021), which would have given nursing facilities the ability to use the National Practitioner Data Bank in order to screen out medical staff with a known record of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. He also serves on the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC)

As former Ranking Member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, he held a hearing in fall 2022 titled "Stopping Senior Scams: Empowering Communities to Fight Fraud" and another in fall 2021 titled "Frauds, Scams and COVID-19: How Con Artists Have Targeted Older Americans During the Pandemic." He and Senator Casey released the Aging Committee's annual Fraud Book, detailing the top 10 scams reported to the Aging Committee's Fraud Hotline.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)

As current Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Wyden has been instrumental in securing funding for elder justice programs, including the combined \$376 million in funding through COVID-19 emergency legislation since December 2020. Last Congress, he co-led the effort to reauthorize the Elder Justice Act and sponsored the Nursing Home Improvement and Accountability Act of 2021.



Key House Leaders in Elder Justice

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

As former Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee's Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services and Chair of the House Elder Justice Caucus, Rep. Bonamici has sponsored numerous bills impacting elder justice, including reauthorizations of the Elder Justice Act and the Elder Pride Act of 2021. She led the House effort to reauthorize the Older Americans Act in 2020. She has also advocated for elder justice funding within Congress and written an op-ed on elder justice.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

As former Chair and current Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee and the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Rep. DeLauro has been a champion for elder justice programs including through her support of increases in funding for elder justice programs and speaking about the seriousness of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Rep. Sylvia Garcia (D-TX)

Rep. Garcia sponsored the Elder Abuse Protection Act of 2021, which would have amended the Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act to create a permanent Elder Justice Initiative (EJI) office within the Department of Justice (DOJ) Criminal Division, mandate that the EJI maintain and publish information to protect older adults from fraud and abuse and require the DOJ to publish EJI resources in English and Spanish. This bill passed the House but did not make it out of the Senate.

Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)

As Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Neal has been a champion for elder justice. He was instrumental in securing funding for elder justice programs, including the combined \$376 million in funding through COVID-19 emergency legislation since December 2020. Along with Sen. Wyden, he co-led an effort last Congress to reauthorize the Elder Justice Act.

Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO)

Rep. Wagner sponsored the Financial Exploitation Prevention Act of 2023, which aims to protect older adults and persons with disabilities from scams that target savings and investments. The Act has already passed the full House and will now be considered by the Senate.

Key Committees and Leadership

Senate Finance Committee

This Committee has jurisdiction over the Elder Justice Act, Medicare, and the Social Services Block Grant, making it a key committee in any elder justice legislation. It is led by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mike Crapo (R-ID).

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee

This Committee has jurisdiction over the Older Americans Act and other health-related legislation. It is led by Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA).

Senate Judiciary Committee

This Committee has jurisdiction over any bills related to the Department of Justice. It is led by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC).

Senate Special Committee on Aging

Though this Committee does not have jurisdiction over any legislation, it partners with other Committees to conduct oversight and investigative activities related to older adults and persons with disabilities. It is led by Sens. Bob Casey (D-PA) and Mike Braun (R-IN).

House Education and Labor Committee

This Committee has jurisdiction over the Older Americans Act. It is led by Reps. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Bobby Scott (D-VA).

House Judiciary Committee

Like the Senate Judiciary Committee, this Committee has jurisdiction over any bills related to the Department of Justice. It is led by Reps. Jim Jordan (R-OH) and Jerry Nadler (D-NY).

House Ways and Means Committee

Like the Senate Finance Committee, this Committee has jurisdiction over the Elder Justice Act, Medicare, and the Social Services Block Grant. It is led by Reps. Jason Smith (R-MO) and Richard Neal (D-MA).

This list is only a starting point; even if your state representatives are not on this list or on a “key” committee, they can be allies in the effort to promote elder justice and prevent elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Introduce yourself and offer yourself and/or your organization as a resource. You can educate them about supporting elder justice and preventing elder abuse in their states, and communities across the nation, provide any data you have on reported cases of elder abuse in the state, and talk about the initiatives in your state.

