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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consumer Voice Applauds Introduction of Bipartisan Legislation to Reauthorize the *Older Americans Act* in the U.S. Senate

Bill would Strengthen Long-Term Services and Supports

Washington, DC, January 20, 2015 – The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) commends Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Patty Murray (D-WA), Richard Burr (R-NC) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) for their introduction of the bipartisan [*Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015, S. 192*](#). This critical legislation seeks to reauthorize, update and strengthen the *Older Americans Act*, legislation enacted into law in 1965 as the primary federal initiative for funding and services in each state to support the dignity and welfare of individuals age 60 or older. The reauthorization and strengthening of the law's programs and services are essential to supporting the needs of an increasingly aging population. As we approach the 50th anniversary of this landmark law, Consumer Voice welcomes the introduction of the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015* to renew our nation's commitment to older Americans and to better protect the rights and well-being of elders living in long-term care facilities, as well as those depending on long-term care services at home and in the community.

Although the *Older Americans Act* is required under law to be reauthorized every four years, the law has not been reauthorized by Congress since 2007. With every day that passes without reauthorization, the future of essential programs and services under the Act that benefit seniors – such as home-and-community based services; nutritional and transportation programs; family caregiver support; and programs that protect vulnerable seniors, such as the long-term care ombudsman program – remain uncertain. In addition, the reauthorization of the *Older Americans Act* allows Congress to update and improve upon the law's vital programs and services. S. 192 would strengthen the current law in a number of ways. For example, it would enhance the effectiveness of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which is authorized under the *Older Americans Act* to provide residents of long-term care facilities access to independent advocacy in order to ensure they receive the quality of care and quality of life they deserve. The Act would also permit ombudsmen, when feasible, to continue to serve residents transitioning from a long-term care facility to a home care setting. Furthermore, the Act would take an important step toward better ensuring quality home care by directing the Assistant Secretary to develop a consumer-friendly tool to assist older individuals and their families in choosing home and community-based services.

Consumer Voice applauds Senators Alexander, Murray, Burr and Sanders for the introduction of S. 192, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015* and the inclusion of vital provisions within this legislation that would better protect and support long-term care consumers. We look forward to working to support passage of this vital bill in the 114th Congress.

About the Consumer Voice

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care was formed as the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform in 1975 because of public concern about substandard care in nursing homes. Today, the Consumer Voice is the leading national voice representing consumers on issues related to long-term care and a primary source of information and tools for consumers, families, caregivers, advocates and ombudsmen to help ensure quality care for the individual.