



## National Indian Council on Aging

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### PRE-WHCOA EVENT SUMMARY REPORT

Name of Event: New Mexico Indian Elders Forum  
Date of Event: May 9, 2005  
Location of Event: Indian Pueblo Cultural Center  
Albuquerque, NM

No. of Persons Attending: 105  
Sponsoring Organizations: National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA);  
New Mexico AARP; New Mexico Department  
of Aging & Long Term Services; and University  
of New Mexico Geriatric Education Center  
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At the Forum, proposed resolutions were brought forward by the National Indian Council on Aging, AARP, the New Mexico Indian Council on Aging, and the Pueblo of Sandia. The Elders in attendance all considered the resolution related to Title VI, the Elder abuse resolution put forth by the National Center to Prevent Elder Abuse and proposed language around issues in each WHCOA policy issue by AARP.

**Priority Issue #1:** Need additional resources for Title VI Programs

Under the Older Americans Act (OAA), Title VI Programs are designed to be analogous to Title III Programs. They should be providing nutritive and other supportive services. The reality is very different

**Barriers:** Historically, Title VI Programs often suffer severe funding shortages making it difficult for most programs to even provide lunches to the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Elders five days a week. In

addition to not being able to provide adequate nutrition services, the Title VI programs do not have money to provide the other supportive services listed in the Act. With many AI/AN Elders raising their grandchildren, it is even more important for them to receive proper nutrition and supportive services as the next generation of the Tribe and community as a whole is often dependent on the Elders remaining healthy and safe in their homes.

Proposed Solution(s): The attached resolution proposes that the President request \$100 million in order to provide adequate services, both nutritive and supportive to AI/AN Elders. The Assistant Secretary on Aging is responsible under Title II of the OAA for advocate for adequate funding for provision of services to Elders. The resolution requests that that responsibility be acknowledged and fulfilled.

## **Priority Issue #2: Funding and Resources for Indian Health Service (IHS)**

The Indian Health Service has been perpetually underfunded for many years now. Most AI/AN Elders receive their health care from the IHS system – either directly from IHS, from Tribes that contract to operate the programs from IHS, or urban Indian clinics, often referred to as *the I/T/U system*.

Barriers: The IHS receives nearly \$3 billion; but, the level of need is conservatively estimated at \$15 billion in order to care for the AI/AN population seeking services. Lack of trained professional staff with the cultural competency to address the health needs of AI/AN Elders is a huge problem throughout the I/T/U system.

Proposed Solution(s): Increase the appropriations for the Indian Health Service and stop the dependence on Medicare, Medicaid and private health insurance reimbursement to supplement the amount provided in the appropriations process. The language in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act specifies that third party reimbursement will not affect the amount appropriated for the Indian Health Service; but, the reality shows that it directly affects the amount each year. Also, the recruitment of AI/ANs into the health profession must increase as many professional staff are not culturally competent to provide adequate care to AI/AN Elders.

See resolution submitted by the New Mexico Indian Council on Aging.

### **Priority Issue #3** Funding and Planning for Long Term Care (LTC) for AI/AN Elders

Due to cultural values, AI/AN Elders remain in their communities and often their own homes instead of moving into a retirement community or in an assisted living facility.

**Barriers:** With only 15 nursing homes in all of Indian Country, planning must happen immediately at the Tribal, state, and national levels in order to accommodate the aging AI/AN population. The lack of a national long term care policy does not assist this situation.

**Proposed Solution(s):** There must be a concerted effort to engage AI/AN Tribes and communities in the process of LTC planning. A survey of LTC needs within Indian Country would be helpful to guide this process. Increased training for families and caregivers as well as more resources for paid family caregivers will improve the care received by the Elder.

**Priority Issue #4:** Reinstate the original income guidelines for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to continue serving low-income Elders.

NICOA's Senior Community Service Employment Program serves all Elders, but specifically targets American Indian Elders to encourage their participation in the program. The majority of participants are low-income; and, the Elders have a difficult time with all the paperwork involved to access any services. The emphasis of the program has been on community service as the Elders employed often have low education and skill levels. The employment training they receive may allow them to find a permanent position; but, it will not generally lead to a higher wage, 40 hours per week job.

**Barriers:** The new income calculation guidelines are keeping many low-income AI Elders from participating in the program. The program provides Elders at least minimum wage pay (dependent on the rate in each state) in which the program operates. This program provides supplemental income to the Elders and supports their local economy as Elders tend to utilize their earnings in the businesses closest to their homes.

Proposed Solution(s): DOL should reinstate the previous income calculation guidelines for the SCSEP program, thereby, opening up the program to increased participation of all eligible low-income AI Elders. As a result, the program will once again be serving all those most in-need, which was the legislative intent of the program enacted by Congress.

**Priority Issue #5**      Address the growing issue of Elder Abuse

The American Indian Elders attending the forum were asked to provide their feedback on the Elder Abuse resolution submitted by the National Center to Prevent Elder Abuse. Many Elders expressed that the resolution should include mandatory reporting and that they often did not want to report their family members for fear of retaliation. They also wanted Tribes to develop Elder Abuse codes and assume jurisdiction. They believe there should be funding for education programs to raise awareness among family members, community members, and professionals within the reservation community.

Their suggested edits to the existing resolution:

#9. include mandatory reporting

#13 add at end: ...”and tribal entities.”

#15. add after elder abuse and neglect .....”in every state and Tribal entities.”

#15. add at end ....”and Tribal entities.”

#15. To include a culturally-specific study to address Elder abuse in Native American Communities.

#16. Require CPR training for Elder Caregivers, bus drivers, cooks, aides, etc.

**Resolution on the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act  
Regarding Provisions Affecting American Indian Elders  
For the  
2005 White House Conference on Aging**

**Whereas** the Older Americans Act is under consideration for reauthorization in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress and the White House Conference on Aging will produce resolutions addressing provisions to amend in the Act; and

**Whereas** the Act contains several key provisions affecting American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Elders; and

**Whereas** Title II states that the Assistant Secretary of Aging shall “serve as the effective and visible advocate for older individuals within the Department of Health and Human Services and with other departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Federal Government by maintaining active review and commenting responsibilities over all Federal policies affecting older individuals;”

**Whereas** the Native American Elders receive fewer than one percent of the services provided under Title III of the Older Americans Act; and

**Whereas** the Native American Elders have the highest rates of disease prevalence and receive less than half of what the federal government provides to federal prisoners for health care; and

**Whereas** Title IV funds projects to decrease the prevalence of health disparities among older Indians; and

**Whereas** Title IV, Part A also provides funding for resource centers and national technical assistance centers to research and examine the health and social services that Indian Elders require; and

**Whereas** Title V provides for a National Indian Sponsor to assure employment training and placement services are provided to Indian Elders who have traditionally been underserved because of their location, discrimination, and poor employment prospects; and

**Whereas** Title VI has never had comparable funding to Title III as mandated and the provision of services to Indian Elders is limited to nutrition services and usually offered only a few days a week; and

**Whereas** elder abuse is a growing issue facing Elders in Indian Country; and,

**Whereas** the Administration has never requested funding for Title VII, Part B, that establishes grants for Native American entities to “carry out vulnerable elder rights protection activities” for older Indians.

**Therefore, Be It Resolved** by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to support policies that:

Provide the necessary services to American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Elders that the Older Americans Act and the federal trust responsibility are designed to address by implementing the following recommendations:

- Assistant Secretary shall act as an advocate and request adequate funding for provisions affecting Native American Elders when the President formulates his annual budget;
- Require the Area Agencies on Aging under Title III to work closely with the Title VI in providing services to Native American Elders;
- Provide for continued training to improve Native American Elders’ access to social services in Indian Country;
- Continue support for national technical assistance centers and resource centers focusing on the health disparities and social service needs of Native American Elders;
- Retain the National Indian Sponsor for the Title V and exclusion from state planning;
- Increase funding for Title V as the number of older low-income Americans is growing, including that of Native American Elders;
- Increase appropriations for Title VI from \$26.4 million to \$100 million by 25% increments annually;
- Increase appropriations to provide adequate training and resources for Title VI staff as well as caregivers; and
- Request \$1 million in first-time funding for Title VI, Part B to provide elder abuse awareness and protection demonstration grants in Indian Country.

**Resolution on Title VI of the Older Americans Act  
For the  
2005 White House Conference on Aging**

**Whereas** Title VI of the Older Americans Act states that the “purpose of this title is to promote the delivery of supportive services, including nutrition services, to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians that are comparable to services provided under title III;” in conformity with the trust responsibility of the federal government; and,

**Whereas** the title also states that it is the sense of Congress that these older individuals “are a vital resource entitled to all benefits and services available and that such services and benefits should be provided in a manner that preserves and restores their respective dignity, self-respect and cultural identities;” and,

**Whereas** the United States Congress, in its 2000 amendments to the Older Americans Act, authorized that the Secretary may make grants available “to pay all of the costs for delivery of supportive services and nutrition services for older individuals who are Indians;” and,

**Whereas** the Administration has failed to request adequate funding to pay for the delivery of supportive services such as transportation and nutrition services for Indian Elders that are being served by Title VI programs; and,

**Whereas** the Congress of the United States, in its 2000 amendments to the Older Americans Act, found that “older individuals who are Indians are served under Title III at a rate of less than 1 percent of the total participants under that title.”

**Therefore, Be It Resolved** by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to support policies that:

Provide the necessary services under Title VI to American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Elders that the Older Americans Act and the federal trust responsibility are designed to address by implementing the following recommendations:

- Assistant Secretary shall act as an advocate and request adequate funding for Title VI services for older Indians when the President formulates his annual budget;
- Require the Area Agencies on Aging under Title III to work closely with the Title VI in providing services to Indian Elders;
- Increase appropriations for Title VI from \$26.4 million to \$100 million by 25% increments annually;
- Provide adequate funding for supportive services such as transportation and provision of meals up to seven days a week; and
- Request adequate funding for proper training, background checks, technical assistance and other resources for Title VI staff as well as caregivers.