



National Indian Council on Aging

10501 Montgomery Blvd. NE, Suite 210, Albuquerque, NM 87111

Telephone 505-292-2001 Fax 505-292-1922

<http://www.nicoa.org>

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White House Conference On Aging: A Great Success for Native Elders

After attending and contributing to numerous pre-White House Conference on Aging events across the country over the past year, the American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian delegates gathered in Washington, DC for the actual event from December 11-14, 2005 as part of the 1200 delegates from across the United States appointed by Members of Congress, state Governors, the National Congress of American Indians and the WHCOA Policy Committee through the at-large process. This four-day event yielded a set of resolutions and practical implementation strategies that will inform and guide the President, Congress, States and Tribes as they work together to address the needs of older Americans.

The number one resolution at the WHCOA receiving the most votes was the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Delegates regardless of age, income, or race ranked its importance first among the final 50 resolutions adopted. The delegates also provided a number of practical implementation strategies for OAA reauthorization, focusing on provisions they wanted to see included by Congress as it considers the legislation this session.

Some of the strategies adopted that specifically pertain to Native Elders include:

1. Maintain the dual purpose of SCSEP program under Title V of the Older Americans Act with emphasis for program performance measures on community service as well as unsubsidized employment placement;
2. Retain the National Indian organization as Title V sponsor and the participation of cultural and ethnically diverse organizations;
3. Provide \$1 million for Title VII, Part B for elder abuse awareness grants to Tribes, Tribal organizations and Indian organizations;
4. Provide \$1.3 million for training and technical assistance to Title VI grantees;

5. Reestablish the Indian White House Conference on Aging to be held prior to the next WHCOA to allow Tribes to present their issues directly to the President and WHCOA Policy Committee in recognition of the federal trust responsibility and the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and Tribes;
6. Elevate the Director of the American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Affairs with the Administration on Aging to the Deputy Secretary level in recognition of the government-to-government relationship; and,
7. Integrate delivery systems to allow Area Agencies on Aging under Title III to assist Tribal councils and Title VI programs in planning for the aging baby boomer population on reservations and how best to provide services to them.

While the conference ended up as a great success for Indian Country, the delegates were not too sure how the event would turn out when they met together on Sunday, December 11, 2005. The President did not address the delegates at the conference, being the first President ever to not attend the White House event. The final WHCOA resolutions to be voted on had only been sent out two weeks prior to the conference; and, many delegates did not receive them prior to leaving for Washington, DC. None of the final resolutions contained Tribal specific provisions, so the delegates drafted a letter to their fellow delegates requesting their assistance in bringing recognition of the federal trust responsibility and the government-to-government relationship between Tribes and the federal government to the attention of the conference. After hearing about the Indian delegation's concerns, the WHCOA Policy Committee prepared completely new materials for Tuesday's implementation strategy sessions that included Tribes as one of the stakeholders along with federal, state, local, community, and private entities for carrying out the recommendations from the conference. As a result, all delegates better understood and welcomed the contributions of the Tribal delegates in preparing the implementation strategies adopted for each of the top 50 resolutions approved at the event.

For complete information on the White House Conference on Aging, including the implementation strategies adopted and the top 50 resolutions, please visit <http://www.whcoa.gov>.

White House Conference on Aging American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Delegates

Indian Country was fortunate that the White House Conference On Aging (WHCOA) Policy Committee designated the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) to appoint 19 delegates to the WHCOA. President Bush appointed two American Indians to the WHCOA Advisory Committee, Kathy Correa (Isleta Pueblo) and Dr. Melvina McCabe (Navajo). In addition, there were two Indians selected through the at-large delegate process and three who were appointed by federal or state elected representatives. The list of those representing Indian Country included:

Frederick Baker (Three Affiliated Tribes), appointed by Governor Hoeven, North Dakota
Haunani Apoliona (Native Hawaiian)
Lee Begay (Navajo), appointed by Governor Napolitano, Arizona
Connie Bremner (Blackfeet)
George Charles (Inupiak)
Frieda Clark (Chickasaw/Choctaw), appointed through at-large selection process
Kathy Correa (Isleta Pueblo), appointed by President Bush to Advisory Cmte.
Larry Curley (Navajo)
James T. DeLaCruz, Sr. (Quinault)
Governor Joe Garcia (Ohkay Owingeh)
Maudean Harden (Choctaw)
Bruce Jones (Lumbee)
Cynthia LaCounte (Turtle Mtn. Chippewa)
Gloria Jetty Lefthand (Spirit Lake Dakota)
Dr. Melvina McCabe (Navajo), appointed by President Bush to Advisory Cmte.
Traci L. McClellan (Cherokee), appointed through at-large selection process
Wendell McLester (Oneida)
Christina Morrow (Meherrin)
Margaret Moss (Three Affiliated Tribes)
Cecilia Nez (Navajo)
Regis Pecos (Cochiti)
Helen Spencer
Steve Wilson (Muscogee Creek)
Patricia Woods (Chickasaw), appointed by Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4th District)

Not in attendance: Elsie Meeks (Oglala Lakota) and Buford Rolin (Poarch Creek)