

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 6, 1996

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I was gratified today to receive the final report of the White House Conference on Aging, a comprehensive look at aging policy in America developed over two years with the input of more than 125,000 men and woman. My deep thanks and appreciation go out to all of those Americans who contributed to this incredible grassroots effort.

These recommendations, which demonstrate strong support for many of the priorities I have been fighting for, including the preservation and protection of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, will be given every serious consideration by my Administration.

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NEWS FROM

THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 6, 1996

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WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING FINAL REPORT RELEASED

The U.S. should protect an increasingly elderly population by providing more home and community based care and shielding existing benefit programs from cuts according to the final report of the 1995 White House Conference on Aging released today. The report also calls for an intergenerational aging policy that ensures a continuing solvency in the Social Security system, endorses a greater investment into aging research, and embodies greater sensitivity to the nation's diversity.

The 590 page report entitled *The Road to an Aging Policy for the 21st Century* represents a composite of the entire bi-partisan White House Conference on Aging process which involved more than 1000 regional, state and local grass roots events and a three day national conference held in May of 1995. The report also contains comments by 46 of the nation's Governors on the issues raised at the WHCoA. More than 125,000 persons participated in the two year process including 2217 delegates at the national event.

"This is a report which will shape aging policy in this country for years to come. It truly represents the desires and directions of older people and their families across the country," Senator David Pryor, Chairman of the WHCoA Policy Committee said.

In the official letter of transmittal to President Clinton, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala said "The report will be a continuing source of guidance to the Federal Government, states, local communities and national organizations concerned with the contributions and needs of older Americans."

The report is based upon the resolutions adopted at the national conference in May. These resolutions were the subject of more than 200 post-Conference events, entitled "Turning Resolutions into Results." Participants in these events developed a series of implementation strategies for each of the resolutions.

WHCoA Executive Director, Robert Blacato remarked "A prevailing sentiment expressed throughout the resolutions and their implementation strategies is the need to consider future generations in the development of aging policy and for those policies to be intergenerational — recognizing that 'aging' programs affect both seniors and their families."

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The following issues were the highest priority for Conference participants:

Social Security -- strong support was registered for full protection of current benefits and a comprehensive look at how to keep the system solvent now and for the next generation of beneficiaries.

Medicare and Medicaid -- Strong support was registered for preserving and protecting Medicare and Medicaid particularly provisions for home and community-based care. Specific opposition was directed at the block-granting of Medicaid, as well as, the loss of entitlement status for millions of low income children, disabled and elderly under Medicaid and using savings from Medicare and Medicaid to finance a tax cut.

Older Americans Act -- Strong support was registered at a number of post-conference forums for a multi-year reauthorization of all existing programs under the Older Americans Act especially nutrition services which include home-delivered and congregate meals, transportation, senior centers, in-home services, elder abuse prevention and nursing home ombudsman. Specific opposition was directed at any block-granting.

Research -- Strong support was registered for increased expenditures for all forms of aging research, especially related to Alzheimer's disease as an investment that will result in substantial long-term cost savings.

Diversity -- The report notes that the number of minority elderly will double by the year 2030 and that plans must be made at all levels to ensure services and programs are more sensitive to this dynamic. The report also notes the rapid growth in the number of *older women* and the special issues confronting them, especially related to health and economic security.

Long-Term Care -- Throughout the process strong sentiment was registered for long-term care being an essential element in future health care policies. This includes developing home and community based alternatives to institutional care and expanded private long-term care insurance.

Grandparents as Caregivers -- The report notes that three million grandchildren are being raised by their grandparents and calls for new and or improved State and Federal laws to help grandparents in this caregiver role.

Senior Volunteers -- The report calls for the development of public and private partnerships that provide resources to support senior volunteer efforts in communities across the country. It specifically calls for the Corporation for National Service to recruit and enroll one million senior volunteers by the year 2000.

In addition, the final report directs special attention to issues related to older Veterans; the need for closer policy and service links between the aging and disability communities; the need for persons to assume greater responsibility for their health; the strengthening and expanding of public-private partnerships in aging; and improving the media's coverage of aging and the elderly.

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The 1995 White House Conference on Aging, with its theme "American Now and Into the 21st Century: Generations Aging Together with Independence, Opportunity and Dignity," was the fourth such conference in history, the first under a Democratic President and the last of the twentieth century. It was authorized by the 1992 Amendments to the Older Americans Act and was officially called by President Clinton on February 17, 1994.

The WHCoA office will close March 31, 1996. Copies of the full final report or an Executive Summary may be obtained by contacting the White House Conference on Aging before March 31, 1996 at (202) 245-7116 or, After March 31, by contacting the National Aging Information Center at (202) 554-9800. Supplies are limited.

****Please note that the implementation strategies for resolution #20, Preventing elder abuse, exploitation and neglect and resolution #32, Preserving and expanding Federal and State elderly housing programs, were inadvertently omitted from the final report. Copies can be obtained by contacting the numbers listed above.**

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