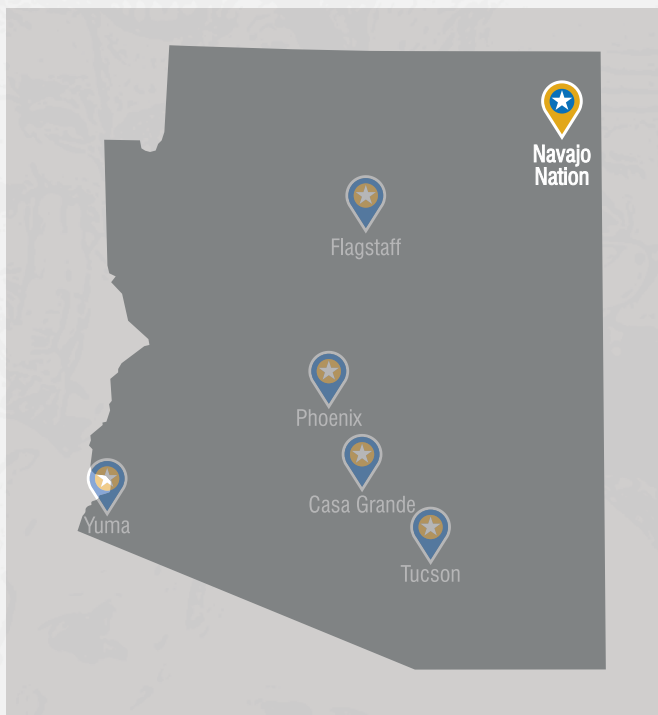


WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING: *Arizona Listening Sessions 2015*

Session Site: The Navajo Nation, Arizona April 7, 2015



On March 31, 2015, the 2015 White House Conference on Aging hosted a regional forum in Phoenix, Arizona. Others from communities across Arizona were able to participate remotely via two listening sessions that were held simultaneously in Flagstaff and Tucson; in early April three additional listening sessions were held in Casa Grande, the Navajo Nation, and Yuma. A recommendation report from each of the five listening sessions was generated and a Summary of the five listening sessions was produced; the Summary and the individual site session reports (five) are available at www.pipertrust.org/aging2015.

Ten elders from each of five agencies within the Navajo Nation were invited to participate in this regional discussion forum of the White House Conference on Aging. Representatives from the Tuba City / Western, Shiprock, Fort Defiance, Chinle, and Crown Point / Eastern agencies participated in the discussions. Because the primary language of most participants is Navajo, to set the stage for the video Dewayne Johnson

provided a description in Navajo of the four subject areas for discussion and highlighted certain issues within those four areas.

Mr. Johnson raised one additional, and thorny, issue of particular concern to Navajos—grandparents raising grandchildren. This last issue has ramifications for the entire community, including elders, their children and their grandchildren, and is an area where traditional Navajo cultural values and practices are not well supported by the federal and state governmental systems intended to provide for their welfare. Mr. Johnson asked the elders to express their ideas for how best to provide the grandchildren who live with them the skills and education those children will need to flourish in the modern world while continuing to provide the family and cultural connections that benefit from the arrangement.

Those gathered then broke into four groups to separately discuss one of the four topics which are the focus of the conference.

During the lunch break several individuals addressed the group to raise overarching issues of concern to the Navajo Nation. The first of these issues was that many of the issues and concerns discussed in the breakout groups were addressed in the Treaty of 1868, but the federal government failed to live up to its promises, including the promise to provide free healthcare and education. They expressed hope that their comments would be heard by the government and that action would be taken on their recommendations.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

Most Important Issues

1. Keep Social Security Retirement: SSA, SSI, SSB, Veterans benefits, etc. (including annual cost of living increases) as they are. No cuts to benefits.
2. Healthcare coverage—medical care should be 100% covered.
3. Need for infrastructure for older Americans—VA hospital, retirement homes, electricity and housing; all should be equipped appropriately.

Solutions

1. Keep retirement age at 60.
2. Mandate social security for Navajos aged 60 and older.
3. Seek alternative resources to pay U.S. government debt. There should be no cuts or reductions in benefits.

HEALTHY AGING

Most Important Issues

1. Comprehensive healthcare, and healthy aging, to include funding for hearing aids, glasses, dental care, handicapped bathrooms, and front entrance ramps and rails; preventive healthcare in general.
2. Care provider and CHR (community health representative).
3. Don't penalize me for my income—provide care for all elders.
4. Environmental issues—elders need clean and safe air and water, waste management, no uranium mining.

LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Most Important Issues

1. More healthcare funds (30% minimum increase).
2. Better network/teamwork with healthcare service and community resources.
3. PACE program—Program of All-Inclusive Care for Elders

ELDER JUSTICE

Most Important Issues

1. More funding for elder abuse prevention programs.
2. Funding for education services and resources. Need more people to educate the elders about elder abuse issues.
3. Continue to fund the Elder Justice Act, and the OAA and continue to fund Title III and Title VI of the OAA (rename this the "No Elder Left Behind" Act).