

**CCoA**  
California Commission on Aging

# AGEWATCH

Special 2015

**White House Conference on Aging**  
Edition

## Obama Administration announces Actions to Empower Older Americans at 2015 White House Conference on Aging



President Obama greets the audience at the White House Conference on Aging.

Seniors and advocates across the nation went online on July 13 to watch the 5th decennial White House Conference on Aging. Although the actual event at the White House seated no more than 150 invitees, the online presence and great anticipation surrounding the event made this the largest White House Conference on Aging ever.

Building on the momentum around the Affordable Care Act and the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, Medicare, and Medicaid, President Obama addressed the conference, releasing a laundry list of major initiatives to strengthen programs serving the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Among the major announcements were: **1)** the launch of [Aging.gov](http://Aging.gov), a **one-stop site** linking to information on federal programs and how to access a wide range local resources; **2)**

the first CMS update in 25 years to federal **nursing homes and skilled nursing facility rules** to improve safety and care quality; **3)** a USDA proposed **rule allowing SNAP** benefits to be used to purchase home-delivered meals; **4)** finalized **Victim of Crime Act Guidelines** authorizing the use of VOCA funds to support legal services and social services for elderly victims of abuse, financial exploitation, fraud and neglect; **5)** the addition of **federal data sets on aging** on [Data.gov](http://Data.gov), the federal government's open data site; **6)** a new **HUD guide on home modification** to help older adults to remain safely in their homes; **7)** launch of the new **\$2.5 million National Aging & Disability Transportation Center** this fall, providing technical assistance to improve availability and accessibility of transportation options; **8)** a **National Institutes of Health September 2015 kick-off of the "Go4Life" campaign** to promote physical activity for older adults; **9)** **\$2.65 million in Senior Corps grants** to place senior corps volunteers in Native American communities; **10)** DOJ commitments to **train prosecutors** in trying elder abuse cases and disseminate law enforcement training materials about elder abuse. To read the full list of initiatives in the White House announcement, click [here](#).



CCoA Chair Virgie P. Walker (L) and Commissioner Paul Downey with Administration for Community Living Assistant Secretary Kathy Greenlee.

AGE WATCH is an occasional publication of the California Commission on Aging (CCoA) intended to inform, educate, and advocate. The CCoA is an independent state agency established in 1973 to serve as the principal state advocate on behalf of older Californians. The CCoA office is located at 1300 National Drive, Suite 173, Sacramento, CA 95834.

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## California reflections on the White House Conference on Aging



**CCoA Chair Virgie P. Walker represented both the Commission and People Coordinated Services of Southern California**

"I was honored to be a part of the White House Conference on Aging, hosted by President Barack Obama, proudly representing California Commission on Aging, People Coordinated Services of Southern California, Inc. and California older adult populations. The conference successfully brought together older adults, caregivers, government officials, community leaders, other experts and professionals to discuss the vision and strategy to meet current and future needs of older adults. It provided an opportunity to listen, learn and share with leaders in the aging field from across the United States. The Conference additionally afforded a time to celebrate such important accomplishments as the Affordable Care Act, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid and the Older Americans Act, and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Social Security.

"The White House Conference also offered an opportunity to reflect on the multiplicity of issues which continue to impact the diverse older adult populations. It reminded me that despite the many successes that we have witnessed, far too many older adults still do not have adequate and secure daily resources and retirements. I left the conference empowered and challenged – challenged to arduously work and advocate for older adults to live and retire with dignity."

**Bruce Chernof, President & CEO of The SCAN Foundation, pointed to three major successes of the 2015 WHCoA:**



"First, President Obama attended and spoke forcefully on the issues at hand. Acknowledging America as an aging and vibrant nation, his remarks are critical given that aging as a personal, family, community, and societal issue gets scant attention compared to other domestic matters. Bringing the bully pulpit to bear on broader questions of how we wish to age; what we want the support system to look like; and how one's dignity, respect, and choice should be honored when having needs – as most of us will – is the White House's appropriate and vital role.

"Second, the Conference theme provided leadership on setting a vision to transform how Americans can talk respectfully about vulnerable aging and the need for daily supports. Speakers broke from well-worn, unproductive narratives of aging (aging = being sick, poor, and alone; caregiving = burden; aging policy = safety net programs), which have made issues of vulnerable aging someone else's problem, therefore excluding it from serious public discourse. Instead, the Conference re-shaped what it means to age with needs in creative ways. How can we learn from the sharing economy to support the needs of older adults living in the community and their caregivers? How can the banking industry play a role in identifying early cognitive impairment and protect against elder abuse? How can technology enable safer, more connected environments so older adults can live as they choose? These discussions are relevant for all economic strata.

"Third, the Conference moved beyond a D.C. beltway debate among policy aficionados engaging local communities and grassroots to grass tops champions. Conference leaders and Cabinet secretaries facilitated listening sessions across the country starting last September at the Foundation's Long-Term Services and Supports Summit and continuing throughout 2015. Conference staff developed four briefs to inform the listening sessions and spark public comment onsite and online. Live streaming and an active social media presence connected 600 community watch parties to the Conference, with the hashtag #WHCOA reaching #3 on Twitter's trending list that day."

To read Dr. Chernof's full commentary, click [here](#).

**CCoA Commissioner Paul Downey represented the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers at the WHCoA:**

*"It was very exciting to be part of the White House Conference on Aging. The President's remarks were very moving when he touched on the importance of assisting seniors in need. The rest of the sessions, which included the Secretaries of HHS, Labor, Agriculture, Veterans Affairs and the Surgeon General, were also important because they emphasized the importance of strong and supportive policies for our nation's seniors. Perhaps the most important take away from the conference was, at least for day, the nation and the media talked aging policy. It is now up to those of us in the aging network to leverage the day into long-lasting and meaningful change."*

**Older Americans Act Reauthorization Passed by the Senate**

The 1100-member National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) (has) commended the Senate for its unanimous voice vote passage of S. 192, the bipartisan Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 (OAA). NANASP Chair Ann Cooper called it "a strong and bipartisan reaffirmation for the value of the Older Americans Act in improving the quality of life for older adults."

NANASP Executive Director Bob Blancato noted that the Senate bill has numerous provisions to preserve the existing good features of the nutrition programs while also making enhancements for the future. "NANASP especially supports the bill's calling for greater use of locally grown fresh foods in nutrition programs, language to more directly utilize dietitians, and the clarification of policy on supplemental foods given with home-delivered meals. These improvements, combined with maintaining separate funding for congregate and home-delivered meals and keeping contributions from participants voluntary, will ensure that the largest program in the OAA continues to be effective in its important mission."

NANASP Immediate Past President Paul Downey commended the bipartisan leadership which produced the Senate-passed bill, specifically Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and HELP Primary Health and Retirement Security Subcommittee Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT). "The OAA has a proud history of bipartisanship which continues today. Thanks to the work of Sens. Alexander and Sanders, along with other committee members, we move forward to the House."

NANASP also praised the Senate bill for its ongoing support of the Senior Community Service Employment Program, which remains in the Department of Labor.

"It is especially appropriate that the Senate bill passes in the same week as the OAA celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 2015 White House Conference was held, which featured a strong endorsement of the Act by President Obama," noted Blancato. Passage by the House of Representatives is needed for the reauthorization bill to reach the President's desk.

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Past meets the present: Three former Assistant Secretaries for Aging -- Fernando Torres-Gil, Jeanette Takamura & Josefina Carbonell -- join with current Assistant Secretary Kathy Greenlee in celebrating 50 years of the OAA.



UCLA's Fernando Torres-Gil, Gretchen Alkema of the SCAN Foundation, and Bob Blancato of the Elder Justice Coalition pictured at the White House Conference on Aging.

2015 WHITE HOUSE  
**CONFERENCE**  
on AGING

President Barak Obama addressed invitees to the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.

**AGEWATCH**

**July 2015**

**Upcoming Events**

August 11-12, 2015 -- Triple-A Council of California. Vagabond Inn, Sacramento.

[www.4tacc.org](http://www.4tacc.org) for information.

September 17-18, 2015 -- California Commission on Aging, Hotel Diamond, Chico.

[www.ccoa.ca.gov](http://www.ccoa.ca.gov) for information.

October 27, 2015 -- The SCAN Foundation 2015 Long-Term Services and Support Summit. Sacramento Convention Center. Early registration is recommended -- visit The SCAN Foundation website for [registration information](#).

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