

Experts propose new policies in advance of White House Conference on Aging

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The 2015 [White House Conference on Aging](#) (WHCoA), slated for July 13 in Washington, DC, is focused on four priority areas: retirement security, healthy aging, long-term services and supports, and elder justice. In response, [The Gerontological Society of America](#) has produced a special issue of *Public Policy & Aging Report* ([Volume 25, Number 2](#)), wherein the nation's foremost experts on these topics make policy recommendations to improve the lives of all Americans as they age. The publication was supported by AARP.

The WHCoA has been held once every decade since the 1960s and offers a unique opportunity to shape the national landscape for aging-related policies. Writing in the new issue's opening editorial, *PP&AR* editor Robert B. Hudson, PhD, said that the rights, roles, and needs of older Americans will hold center stage at this year's event.

"It is important that such deliberations take place because the demographics and economics of aging continue to shift in important ways," Hudson stated. "Long gone—thanks largely to public policy—are days when elders were singularly poor and frail. Yet, a new series of pressures associated with extended lives, income differentials, and living environments will mark aging in the years ahead."

Multiple policy proposals for each of the WHCoA's four topics are included. For elder justice, they include calls for a public awareness campaign, elder mistreatment education, the creation of an elder abuse prevention database, and mobilizing advocates toward empowering older people around the prevalence and danger of elder abuse.

On the subject of long-term services and supports, the authors advocate increasing services availability, providing enhanced caregiver support and training, improving technology-enabled care, expanding efforts to measure both services quality and client outcomes, addressing the needs of the

direct-care workforce, and devising a public-private solution to the endemic financing problems impeding the delivery of needed care.

With regard to retirement security, the experts say that eligibility periods for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) should be extended, and Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services data should be used to alert elders to their SNAP eligibility. Others argue that Social Security should be strengthened and benefits increased.

To promote healthy aging, the articles cover several initiatives. One proposes that Americans adopt major changes in lifestyle and a focus on prevention, while embracing technological advances, workplace redesign and, more broadly, a paradigm shift stressing both individual responsibility and population-wide strategies. Another piece demonstrates the value of [age](#)-friendly communities, which have been shown to address the problems of isolation, economic insecurity, and lack of mobility.

The latest issue of *PP&AR* is part of a larger effort GSA is undertaking to help ensure the 2015 WHCoA is a success. On June 25, GSA will host a webinar titled "[New Visions for Long-Term Services and Supports: The Aging Network & the White House Conference on Aging](#)," with WHCoA Executive Director Nora Super, MPA, among the speakers. She previously participated in a WHCoA listening session at GSA's most recent Annual Scientific Meeting in Washington, DC.

GSA also is a founding member of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, which together with AARP held a series of five WHCoA regional forums designed to gain input on the key issues from older Americans, their families, caregivers, and authorities in the field of aging. In April, another GSA journal, *The Gerontologist*, dedicated an issue ([Volume 55, Number 2](#)) to the four themed topics of

the WHCoA.

"GSA always has had a special relationship with the WHCoA," said GSA's director of [public policy](#), Greg O'Neill, PhD. "I view the articles in this issue of PP&AR as continuing our long tradition of providing the WHCoA with thought leadership that supports our common missions to develop effective policies that will benefit our aging society in the years ahead."

Provided by The Gerontological Society of America

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