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Preventing elder abuse, exploitation, and neglect

- 1 WHEREAS the reported incidence of elder abuse in America increased by 94 percent between 1986 and 1991 and is expected to grow in the future;
- 2 WHEREAS more than one million women age 65 and over are victims of abuse each year;
- 3 WHEREAS many older persons, particularly women and minorities, fail to report abuse because of shame, fear of retaliation or previous unsatisfactory experiences with police, district attorneys, or social workers who lacked sensitivity to the concerns or needs of older people;
- 4 WHEREAS current Federal legislation does not provide for one agency to coordinate a response to the needs of older victims;
- 5 WHEREAS Part B of Title VII of the Older Americans Act authorizes funding for Indian tribes and organizations to conduct elder protective service activities;
- 6 WHEREAS present data collection efforts on elder abuse are insufficient, and few crime-related statistics identify the age, gender, race, and disability level of victims; and
- 7 WHEREAS there are no uniform definitions describing elder abuse, exploitation, or neglect;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the 1995 White House Conference on Aging to support policies that:

- 8 Encourage Congress to fully fund Older Americans Act programs, including but not limited to, Part B of Title VII;
- 9 Initiate a national education campaign via public/private partnerships to heighten the public's ability to recognize and report the symptoms of abuse and to advocate for freedom from abuse;
- 10 Enact Federal legislation to require each State to designate a single agency where none currently exists to coordinate elder abuse, exploitation, and neglect response programs;
- 11 Develop and implement training and continuing education programs to develop the skills, awareness, and sensitivity of police, district attorneys, social services and health care professionals to the special needs of older persons and abuse victims, especially women and minorities;

- 12 Increase the authority and resources of the long-term care ombudsman program and for elder protective services;
- 13 Develop counseling programs for victims and perpetrators, including the use of peer counselors;
- 14 Develop uniform definitions and a reporting system for elder abuse, fraud, neglect, and exploitation at State and tribal levels and designate the Administration on Aging (AoA) to coordinate this information;
- 15 Encourage public/private partnerships to undertake research studies on elder abuse, documenting the number of elder abuse cases and collecting demographic data such as type of abuse, relationship to abuser, age, gender and race of abuse victims, and risk factors;
- 16 Establish an elder abuse reporting hotline in each State.

