



## Historic Breakthrough: Federal Aging Report Explicitly Includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Elders

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The long-awaited Final Report of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA), released by the Administration on Aging, marks a milestone in the fight for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders. Months of intensive organizing, including town hall meetings held around the country and the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**-convened Make Room for All diversity summit last December -- a counterpoint to the WHCoA -- have paid off in the explicit inclusion of LGBT elders in the report.

Resolution 34, for example, includes the following implementation strategy: "Expand the definition of minority populations to include -- gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders [sic] and seniors with disabilities, and increase federal funding to NIH, CDC, Title 3 and other federal agencies to reduce health disparities and promote health promotion programming for all minority populations."

LGBT elders and their advocates converged on the nation's capital last December for Make Room for All: A National Summit and Hearing on the Recommended Priorities for the WHCoA: Diversity, Cultural Competency and Discrimination in an Aging America. Sponsored by the Task Force, the event highlighted the growing diversity of the country's aging population, as well as the challenges that diversity presents to policymakers and service providers.

Make Room for All, essentially a countersummit to the WHCoA, was backed by Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE); the American Society on Aging and its constituency groups, the Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network and the Network on Multicultural Aging; National Association on HIV Over Fifty; Older Women's League; and Griot Circle, among others.

Elder advocates also challenged the WHCoA at a Dec. 13 press conference for refusing to include sexual orientation, gender identity and other vulnerable populations in its resolutions. In addition, critics -- including WHCoA delegates -- had said rigid conference procedures and vague resolutions were preventing substantive discussion of critical aging issues such as improving the cultural competency of service providers, providing adequate funding for the implementation of elder care services, and bolstering the economic security of a diverse aging population.

As co-founders of the Diversity in Aging Coalition, SAGE and the Task Force are building a network of support among those advocating policies that reflect the diverse experiences of our nation's seniors.

"Our community refuses to sit on the sidelines and watch our needs go ignored," said Amber Hollibaugh (pictured), a Task Force senior strategist and one of the nation's premier specialists on LGBT aging issues. "Our community's inclusion in this final report reflects this unwavering principle."