

The Nation's Rural Elderly
Hearing before the Social Committee on Aging United States Senate

Phoenix, AZ

November 12, 1977

Issue: Programs are going to have to start looking at why the tribes are not being allowed to participate fully for a variety of reason and to benefit fully under the resources

Issue: We ought to get back to direct funding and maximum control over programs by tribal groups

Issue: Develop closer relationships with working committees and concerned people so that the right people get involved with programs.

Issue: We need to recognize the need to revise rules and regulations so that the Indian Tribes will have assurance that Indian People's needs are effectively administered in their own environment, that the Federal government is aware and should recognize that Indian Tribes are quasi-sovereign entities capable of administering their own programs within their right.

Issue: The inadequacy of nutritional programs for our Indian people are due to lack of facilities.

Issue: Basing services as to the regulations set fourth for a metropolitan or urban area then it becomes difficult because of distances and transportation. The acute needs of the reservation Indian become a barrier which with significance, we take recourse to our own ethic ways.

Issue: Initiating through education so that efforts be made now for better housing, cleanliness, self-respect, efficiency, responsiveness, pride, and mental well-being.

Issue: Elders are better served when they can be taken care of in their own home grounds rather than be sent miles away from their familiar surroundings.

Issue: Direct funding of all Older Americans Act programs to Indian tribes at their own option. This means support for the amendment being sponsored by the National Indian Council on Aging for direct funding and that the population statistics that the tribes use in receiving federal funds from other agencies also be used in the distributions of Older American Act funds.

Issue: Coordinate all aging services through the family, the community, and the local unit of government. This should include the setting of priorities and control of the finances at the local level so that the true needs of the elderly people can be met.

Issue: The multipurpose concept of service delivery through a senior citizens center should be established and funded at a national level. This would insure more comprehensive delivery of services in the Navajo Nation.

Issue: Funding for services to Indian elderly must be increased to meet standards of equivalency regardless of rural or urban living conditions.

Issue: There should be a base level for services to be delivered in rural areas. If higher level of services are needed, funds should be provided in order to help those people.

Issue: Meals on wheels funding is needed in order to provide services to the very isolated rural elderly. This would have a major impact on the Navajo Nation elderly.

Issue: There should be a nationwide home health care program for elderly and handicapped people. Rural elderly should not be denied these services just because of their isolation

Issue: There should be a national insurance policy for vehicles used to provide transportation services to elderly people no matter what program.

Issue: There should be unified eligibility requirements and mandated coordination of services for elderly for all Federal programs, especially those under the Older Americans Act and the Social Security Act.

Issue: "Population statistics used by the States and Federal Government regarding Indian elderly Population needs to be fixed. The Navajo has seen estimates of 7000 elderly while the tribes estimate is over 14,000. "

Issue: The facilities that are being planned do not take into consideration the needs of the elderly people because there is no such health policy with regard to Indian elderly people through the US Public Health Service.

Issue: "The transportation standards and requirements are so different for each Federal program and elderly people can be denied by programs through State regulation or through Federal Regulation because eligibility standards."

Issue: Not much technical assistance has been given to the Navajo nation to assist them in developing a transportation plan which can actually meet the people's needs.

Issue: Legal services are not mentioned enough although they are needed as Indian people are still under assault through Federal and State regulations regarding their legal rights and consumer problems.

Issue: The BIA has an unwritten policy that if you are too old, you are not eligible for housing.

Issue: There are never enough funds to the job right since Title III and VII nutrition programs were provided through Indian Health Services.

Issue: The one thing that we are always short on is transportation. We never have enough money to bring the elderly to the center as we run out of money 3-4 months ahead of schedule.

Issue: "We would like to work on having housing for the elderly on the reservation so that the elders don't need to be sent away and they can live with their own people and receive the best care and better protective services. This would save the government money in the long run."

Issue: Hopi Tribe has experienced great difficulty in securing adequate funding through Arizona agencies for aging to provide necessary services for the Hopi Elderly. Petition Congress to amend the Older Americans Act to provide for direct federal funding of programs to serve our elderly and fund all programs for a minimum of 5 years.

Issue: Indian self-determination cannot be carried out when the money and control over programs is given to the state.

Issue: Establishing a nursing home on the Hopi Reservation is a priority. Currently, they are being sent miles away to get the care they need. Many elderly die early due to a sense of alienation and loneliness.

Issue: Some of the elders live alone and are too incapacitated to live in Existing private dwellings without adequate supervision. Sufficient funds should be provided for adequate care for the elderly in all areas of identified service needs such as homemaker services and social services to meet their social and emotional needs.

Issue: Some of the elders are suffering from malnutrition. This is from the lack and inadequate information regarding a properly balanced diet. The Federal food programs are not designed to meet the nutritional needs of the Hopi elderly.

Issue: Lack of transportation deters the elderly from acquiring the necessities which would assure him of a normal and healthy life. This also denies elders the opportunity to obtain the necessary medical services.

Issue: Funds are inadequate to finance social and cultural needs oriented toward the Hopi Tribe.

Issue: There are a lack of funds for dental care, hearing aids, and eye glasses. Medical services for elderly Indians are inadequate to meet their needs. Several reasons for this is the insufficient funds for staffing, inadequate health facilities, and the lack of concern from the Federal and State services on aging. This means that the Indian people generally suffer from poor health.

Issue: The Hopi Tribe is best suited to be directly funding as they are best equipped to manage their own programs. Funding must also be provided under all titles and it must be sufficient for the numerous necessary programs.

Issue: A nursing home is very much needed on the reservations so that elderly people have a place to feel comfortable rather than distant and isolated

Issue: Foster care is in demand for the elderly who do not need skill care, during the cold months. Most of the nursing homes in the valley will not accept the elderly who do not need skill care.

Issue: Most elderly do not own vehicles and transportation is a huge concern. A relevant transportation program is a huge must.

Issue: The existing housing program criteria eliminates the elderly from the start due to their meager income and the eligibility age is high as we have few elders that reach above age 65.

Issue: The work program should be based on a year-round. The work is currently based on a small budget which allows only 3 months activity for 10 participants.

Issue: The new homes that were built in the Peach Springs area are drafty and cold that we can only live in the front room where the fireplace is and when it rains the roof leaks

Issue: The water pressure is also a huge problem as it is very weak.

Issue: Our elderly that are living in Kingman are not eating the food that is being served because they wish for Indian food. They feel isolated and unwanted.

Issue: A nursing home in White river is very needed as our elderly do not live in the sanitary conditions. When nursing homes are needed the elderly refuse because they do not know anyone there and the staff do not know their customs or language.

Issue: We need educational loans so that more people can go away and become nurses and physicians and business/ hospital administrators and they can run these needed facilities.

Issue: "Funding doesn't increase while inflation make the same amount of money less and less useful. The salaries of doctors and nurses go up, but the funding is not able cover it. Right now, we cannot afford our physician."

Issue: The funding we receive now does not cover all the issues and it needs to be increased.

Issue: The money is needed to provide transportation programs and nutrition programs. The funding that is there is not enough to cover the whole reservation.

Issue: We want to keep our elders home on the reservation. It's hard to send them away because we don't have the funding.

Issue: American Natives should have more input in decision making. We want to have our voices heard because in our culture, we believe that to have the most involvement is to have the right to be heard and be a part of decision making processes.

Issue: The way of the native culture is being lost as the elderly cannot teach younger generations.

Issue: We need more funding. As it is we are 12 years behind. People that need housing don't get the funding they need.

Issue: Indian people have suffered from the paralysis of analysis. There are continual studies that focus on the Indian problems. Bottom-line is the misuse of funds.

Issue: We lack the know how to use programs and keep supervision of the elderly's family who rip them off.

Issue: Too much has been put into nutrition, keep it simple so that it is easy to follow.

Issue: Mass transportation doesn't work. Best thing to do is to have vouchers or coupons to buy gas or fix a flat tire and provide "your own" transportation.

Issue: The people who don't have much never get to these meetings where as the person who has 3 houses or can afford a vehicle they get to these meetings to be heard.

Issue: The elderly cannot compete for jobs or programs when they lack education and skills prior to coming of "modern wages"

Issue: Elderly people are unaware of services that are available. This is a result of poor communication, education, transportation, and poor news media coverage.

Issue: We need more staff and transportation programs and we don't have enough funds. This means that we only serve one-fourth of our elderly

Issue: We need more funds to provide nutrition, health, education, and transportation

Issue: Better housing and housing maintenance, statements concerning the inability of the elderly to maintain and repair their homes.

Issue: The Elderly need winter clothing

Issue: there is a great need to have two more 12 passenger vans to transport the elderly to the congregated field sites, 5 days a week. Those who live in remote areas are not being reached by the services

