

For Immediate Release
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Grassley Tapped for National Conference on Aging

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley has been selected to serve on the White House Conference on Aging, which will make recommendations next year on public and private efforts to promote the dignity, health, independence and economic security of older Americans.

Grassley will serve on the 17-member policy committee, which is appointed by the President and Congressional leaders. The formal conference will be held sometime before December 21, 2005.

"This conference gives policy makers, advocates and eldercare providers a platform to confront the challenges, herald the advances and highlight the opportunities facing an aging American society," Grassley said. "We're nearing the retirement years of the big baby boomer generation, and now is the time to get ready. The mass retirement of this generation will put a strain on aging-related resources like never before. We've taken some important steps to prepare, such as modernizing Medicare, but we should do even more."

The White House Conference on Aging is charged with developing 50 recommendations to guide the legislative and executive branches of government on how to better serve older Americans. Ideas promoted by previous White House conferences have been incorporated into Congressional action on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, nutrition programs for the elderly and senior housing, for example.

In Congress, Grassley has a long record of successful policy initiatives to improve the quality of life of older Americans, from pocketbook to health care security. He has pursued measures as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, chairman of the Senate Aging Committee and a charter member of the Aging Committee in the House of Representatives.

Just last year, he was the lead architect in the Senate of legislation to modernize the 38-year-old Medicare program and provide a prescription drug benefit for senior citizens. Over the years, he has conducted oversight to curb fraud against Medicare and protect the resources needed to serve beneficiaries. The Grassley-sponsored changes to the False Claims Act in 1986 have today become the government's most effective tool against health care fraud.

In previous years, Grassley has sponsored legislation to extend the solvency of Social Security, which he has called the government's most successful program ever. Grassley has been responsible for numerous policy initiatives that have become law over the last two decades to expand access to health care services for the elderly. When the Older Americans Act was renewed in 2000, Grassley got included a new program to support family caregivers, including those who often care for older family members. In 1984, Grassley was responsible for the updates to the Older Americans Act as chairman of the subcommittee on aging of the then-Labor and Human Resources Committee.

In 2001, Grassley was responsible for passage of tax measures to help working Americans save more for retirement. He has sponsored legislation to simplify and protect workers' pensions, lessen the tax burden on retirees and expand long-term care insurance

coverage. Grassley led an oversight effort which resulted in greater and more effective federal scrutiny of the quality of care in nursing homes.

The White House conferences started in 1961 and have occurred about every ten years. The most recent conference, in 1995, was attended by more than 3,000 people, including 2,217 delegates from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. Most of the delegates were selected by governors, members of Congress and constituent advocacy groups.