

# Proceedings of the Blaine House Conference on Aging



September 21, 2006  
Augusta Civic Center  
Augusta, Maine

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## I. Listening to Older Mainers

The Blaine House Conference on Aging was more than just a one-day event. It was part of a much larger, ongoing process to involve Maine's older persons in the creation of policies and programs that affect them.

The process began in March 2006, when Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) urged the State of Maine to bring back the Blaine House Conference on Aging after a 16-year hiatus. Governor Baldacci and Commissioner of Health and Human Services Brenda Harvey agreed that this was an excellent idea.

The Office of Elder Services then created a Steering Committee to help plan for the conference. Participants included representatives of the AAAs, AARP, Alzheimer's Association-Maine Chapter, Council of Senior Citizens, Elder Law Section of the Maine Bar Association, Keeping Seniors Home, Legal Services for the Elderly, the Long Term Care Ombudsman, Maine Center on Aging at the University of Maine, and the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine. We thank the Steering Committee for their invaluable guidance.

In August 2006, the AAAs coordinated and supported 15 local forums to explore issues and identify delegates for the Blaine House Conference on Aging. More than 300 people participated in forums held in Bangor, Calais, Dover-Foxcroft, Ellsworth, Fort Kent, Hallowell, Houlton, Lisbon, Millinocket, Newcastle, Presque Isle, South Paris, Scarborough, Wells, and Wilton. We thank the AAAs for their strong and continuing commitment to older Mainers.

On September 21, Governor Baldacci and Commissioner Harvey convened the Blaine House Conference on Aging. During the conference—

- Laurie Lachance, Executive Director of the Maine Development Foundation, shared riveting demographic information in her presentation, entitled "The Face of Aging in Maine."
- Delegates met in eight smaller group sessions to explore a variety of topics—caregivers of long term care services (paid), caregivers of long term care services (family members), community involvement/ volunteerism, creative housing and services, elder abuse, employment, healthy aging, and transportation.
- The full conference voted on 25 action resolutions reported out from the smaller group sessions. These are being shared with executive branch officials, legislators, and community leaders to help guide them as they develop and carry out aging policies in the coming months and years.

## II. How Older Mainers Can Exercise Their Voices

The purpose of both the local forums and the Blaine House Conference on Aging was to create opportunities for older Mainers to speak out and be heard on issues of concern to them, especially in light of the demographic “elder wave”. During the conference many delegates asked how they can stay involved in local and state issues that affect them. Here is a list of organizations that are eager to be partners in advocacy with older Mainers. Please contact any of these with ideas and questions about aging issues.

### **Area Agencies on Aging**

#### **Aroostook Agency on Aging**

(Serving Aroostook County)

1-800-439-1789    [www.aroostookaging.org](http://www.aroostookaging.org)

#### **Eastern Agency on Aging**

(Serving Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington counties)

1-800-432-7182    [www.eaaa.org](http://www.eaaa.org)

#### **SeniorsPlus**

(Serving Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties)

1-800-427-1241    [www.seniorsplus.org](http://www.seniorsplus.org)

#### **Senior Spectrum**

(Serving Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo counties and the towns of Brunswick and Harpswell)

1-800-639-1553    [www.seniorspectrum.org](http://www.seniorspectrum.org)

#### **Southern Maine Agency on Aging**

(Serving York and Cumberland counties, except the towns of Brunswick and Harpswell)

1-800-427-7411    [www.smaaa.org](http://www.smaaa.org)

#### **Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging**

One Weston Court/PO Box 5415

Augusta, ME 04332

207-626-0972

### **AARP of Maine**

1685 Congress Street

Portland, ME 04102

1-866-554-5380    Email: [me@aarp.org](mailto:me@aarp.org)

**Keeping Seniors Home**

Western Maine Community Action  
PO Box 200  
East Wilton, ME 04234  
1-800-645-9636    [www.wmca.org](http://www.wmca.org)

**Long Term Care Ombudsman Program**

One Weston Court / P.O. Box 128  
Augusta, Maine 04332-0128  
1-800-499-0229    [www.maineombudsman.org](http://www.maineombudsman.org)

**Legal Services for the Elderly**

9 Green Street / P.O. Box 2723  
Augusta ME 04338-2723  
1-800 750-5353

**Maine Alzheimer's' Association**

163 Lancaster Street / Suite 160B  
Portland, ME 04101  
1-800-660-2871

**Maine Center on Aging**

5723 Donald P. Corbett Business Building  
University of Maine  
Orono, Maine 04469  
207-581-3444    [www.umaine.edu/mainecenteronaging/](http://www.umaine.edu/mainecenteronaging/)

**Maine Council of Senior Citizens**

PO Box 1072  
Augusta, ME 04332

**Office of Elder Services**

11 State House Station  
442 Civic Center Drive  
Augusta, ME 04333  
1-800-262-2232    TTY: 1-800-606-0215    [www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/)

### III. Call to Action: Twenty-Five Resolutions

Delegates at the Blaine House Conference on Aging participated in one of eight smaller group sessions to explore a variety of topics—paid caregivers of long term care services, caregivers of long term care services who are family members, community involvement/volunteerism, creative housing and services, elder abuse, employment, healthy aging, and transportation.

The full conference voted on the following 25 action resolutions reported out from the smaller group sessions. These are being shared with executive branch officials, legislators, and community leaders to help guide them as they develop and carry out aging policies in the months and years ahead.

Issues	Action Resolutions
Caregivers (Family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not adopt proposed DHHS rule that compensation payments to family caregivers be treated as a gift for the purposes of determining eligibility.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide family caregivers entering the long term care system with well-publicized and centralized access to needed information and educational resources.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tax credits for unpaid caregivers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require that comprehensive plans for municipalities include a component addressing senior issues.</li> </ul>
Caregivers (Paid)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the pay and benefits for direct care workers to a living wage.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide good training and pay direct care workers for the level of training and difficulty of the work they perform. Value the work they do.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for worker involvement in collaborative decision-making.</li> </ul>
Community Involvement/ Volunteerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and/or modify stipends / incentives for volunteers and organizations.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate regional offices as clearinghouses for recruitment, education, and recognition.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach—               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reach out to ask for volunteers.</li> <li>○ Take an inter-generational approach.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Issues	Action Resolutions
Creative Housing and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively work with federal, state and private sectors to prioritize and support seniors' ability to stay safely and securely at home, including incentives and resources for things such as home modifications, repairs, and supportive in-home services.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand affordable housing alternatives/arrangements for people with dementia and other special needs.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop cooperative models that are inter-generational, community-based and that promote elders helping elders and families helping families with coordinated assistance from government (federal, state and local) and from the private sector.</li> </ul>
Elder Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a powerful educational marketing campaign to highlight the problem of elder abuse in Maine, led and supported by the highest government officials in the State.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a task force to review elder abuse legal issues and recommend legislative actions relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registration and licensing of home contractors,</li> <li>○ Requiring financial institutions to be mandated reporters,</li> <li>○ Requiring background checks for all unlicensed assistive personnel, and</li> <li>○ Amending the improvident transfer of titles to include transfers that occur at the time of death.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a broad-based effort to educate people who work with seniors, including where they can go to report and get help. This education would include anyone involved, including home care assistance, health care, professionals, and non-professionals.</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Legislature establish a work group to review senior employment issues and recommend legislative actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Modify laws that are barriers to senior employment,</li> <li>○ Promote best practices in senior employment,</li> <li>○ Alleviate benefit reductions for working seniors,</li> <li>○ Undertake a public education campaign to promote the value of seniors, and</li> <li>○ Establish a senior corps.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Issues	Action Resolutions
Employment continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an initiative—involving chambers of commerce, business associations, and all state agencies involved with seniors and employment—to educate employers and businesses about the value of senior workers, how to attract and retain them, and how to implement senior-friendly policies.</li> <li>• Ensure that ‘no senior is left behind’ by establishing an all-inclusive interactive senior website and establishing several pilot training programs to develop best practices for senior employment training.</li> </ul>
Healthy Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that elders have affordable access to and education about all the drugs they <u>truly</u> need by urging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Congress to eliminate restrictions on negotiating discounted prices on drugs through Medicare Part D,</li> <li>○ Maine AARP to lobby for the elimination of these restrictions, and</li> <li>○ The DHHS Office of Elder Services and all agencies serving the elders to publicize the availability of low cost drugs through MaineR(x) or the pharmaceutical companies, using all media (e.g. TV, PSAs).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bring together partners to create a sound plan for preventive services and programs to enhance physical and mental health, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All life stages,</li> <li>○ Collaborating to find outside funding,</li> <li>○ Determining legislative action, and</li> <li>○ Coordinating across programs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It is possible to age in a healthy way. Communication and having information available on a local level are essential. Increase communication and outreach by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Educating older Mainers to be better self-advocates in the health care system,</li> <li>○ Getting prevention information to health care providers,</li> <li>○ Putting flyers in everyone’s mailbox about local services,</li> <li>○ Getting information on aging to community organizations,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Issues	Action Resolutions
Healthy Aging continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Getting information on aging to local legislators, and</li> <li>○ Using Area Agencies on Aging newsletters, community newspapers, public access TV, and PSAs.</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an information clearinghouse to keep seniors aware of available services, including transportation and 211.</li> <li>● Develop an integrated bus network, including all publicly funded systems (even school buses): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ That provides a reliable, regular schedule for older people and people with disabilities,</li> <li>○ In which payment for services takes into account one's ability to pay, and</li> <li>○ That will happen now!</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Have a "transportation tsar", appointed by the Governor to focus on transportation for older Mainers, whose job is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oversee a line item in the state budget for transportation funding for older Mainers,</li> <li>○ Serve as a watchdog and ensure adequate funding, and</li> <li>○ Monitor and report back on implementation of funded programs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## IV. Summary of Eight Smaller Group Sessions

As mentioned previously, the Blaine House Conference on Aging offered smaller group sessions on eight topics—paid caregivers of long term care services, caregivers of long term care services who are family members, community involvement/volunteerism, creative housing and services, elder abuse, employment, healthy aging, and transportation. Employment was not one of the original topics, but was added to the conference agenda after strong interest emerged at several of the 15 local forums held in August. This section of the conference proceedings presents a summary of the sessions.

### A. CAREGIVERS OF LONG TERM CARE (FAMILY)

Facilitator: Nöelle Merrill, Eastern Agency on Aging

**Money Follows the Person.** The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should apply for federal “Money Follows the Person” funding. This gives states money to shift from institutional care to home care and community-based services. We all want to remain home. The State should take advantage of this.

**Care for Children.** One person had a sick husband and a daughter who was not caring for her children. This person needed to find way to take care of both her husband and grandchildren. It was too cumbersome and challenging to get help.

**Tax Credit.** There should be a tax credit for unpaid caregivers.

**Education.** There should be education for managing money. There should be education for family members relating to the transition that happens when the system takes over. Family caregivers lose control when a hospital, nursing facillite, etc. takes control over what happens. There should be education for family members about how to have a voice and they need help getting out. There are no provisions to work with family to help their family member move out of long term care.

**Registry; Centralized Information.** There should be a registry—a list of people families can call for help. This should be more than just a list of names; it needs to be official, approved. There also should be centralized information to help friends and families help seniors. This should describe the Goold assessment process and home-based care programs.

At present, there is a lack of easily accessible information for families. Even doctors can't connect them with information and resources. The lack of information should be addressed for people coming into home care for the first time.

**Worker Shortage.** There is a shortage of geriatric care managers in state. Caregivers are not available in certain parts of the state (e.g. Hancock County). There is a lack of trained home health providers. Federal programs relieve new doctors of school debt if they work in underserved areas. Why couldn't there be a program to help direct care workers relocate to underserved areas?

**Proposed Rule Change.** There is a proposed rule change to make payments to family caregivers treated as a gift for purposes of determining eligibility, rather than a payment. There is a public hearing on October 2.

**MaineCare and Middle Class.** There is more money available for MaineCare, but nothing for the middle class. Private duty nurses cost a bundle.

**Companion Program.** Companions are scheduled to come in for an hour or two, couple days a week to give caregivers some respite. Funding for companion care has decreased.

**Dementia.** The problem of dementia is expected to triple. How does this get addressed? The Alzheimer's Respite program should be expanded to middle class. This program has an asset limit, not an income limit, but it should still be expanded. Dementia doubles the stress on caregivers. There is not anything for people who care for people with dementia. Respite and day programs are needed.

**Comprehensive Plan; Transportation.** Communities should have a section in their comprehensive plans addressing the needs of seniors. Given the declining school populations, we should turn schools into adult day programs, fostering inter-generational community.

**Transportation.** This is a huge issue for the middle class. MaineCare will pay for taxi or ambulance. The comprehensive plan should also hit transportation. Through the Faith in Action grant on Mount Desert Island, volunteers, provide transportation for seniors.

**Public Information.** There should be public information encouraging family caregivers to get out and participate in support groups. There should be educational pieces in newspapers, public service announcements, etc., There is a ton of information at an Expo. When you want something, don't know where to begin. When you start out, you need somewhere to begin.

How do we know what is available? How make this more visible? We need marketing—spreading the word about what is available. We need a refrigerator card that has basic information to grab in an emergency, so we don't have to scramble in time of crisis.

**It Takes Too Long To Get Answers.** Everything is too slow. When you have a problem, it can take a year before you get an answer. We need to make decisions and make changes faster.

**Legal Issues.** Forms to protect a person (e.g. durable power of attorney, health directives) also can create barriers to the person staying in community. There is confidentiality regarding the existence of power of attorney, etc.

**Safety Assessment.** There should be a safety assessment in the home. Family members are willing to provide care, but they need ideas about how to modify the home so people can live there safely. Also, there is a need to obtain adaptive equipment or devices that are not paid for under MaineCare.

**Family Training.** Multi-generational training should be provided. The whole family providing care should be educated.

**Money Saved.** When seeking funding for family caregiver support at the Legislature, it is important to show how much is saved by family caregivers. This must be seen as an investment in home services that will result in savings. Family caregivers are saving the nation billions of dollars.

**Public Funding for Home Care.** We haven't seen the full impact of federal Deficit Reduction Act. We don't have sufficient public funding for home care. This is not because the middle class isn't doing its fair share; but the top 5% is not doing its fair share. Large corporations are not paying their fair share of taxes.

**Respite Care.** When caregivers need respite care, who can they turn to? They need to have confidence in the person who provides this. There needs to be screening.

**Priorities.** The group generated the following list of issues as they discussed priorities to address through action resolutions:

- DHHS should pursue the Money Follows the Person grant opportunity. This can be a short-term recommendation to DHHS rather than a longer term action resolution.
- The DHHS proposed rule re compensation payment to family givers should not be passed.

- Provide tax credits to unpaid caregivers.
- Provide education to family caregivers.
- Combine access to information.
- The State should require that comprehensive plans for municipalities should include a component addressing senior issues.
- The State should provide incentives, including housing assistance, in relocating direct care workers where they are needed.
- Address the needs of middle income families.
- Consider the issues of housing, transportation, and care-giving together, not separately in silos.

## B. CAREGIVERS OF LONG TERM CARE (PAID)

Facilitator: Jane Orbeton, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis, Maine Legislature

**Key Areas.** The subject areas that emerged from regional forums held around Maine in August include: 1) increase pay and benefits of direct care workers; 2) provide training; 3) strategy planning; and 4) other. Valuing workers in order to improve attracting and retaining workers is an overarching consideration.

**Discrepancy in Pay and Benefits.** Wages are not enough to draw people into this line of work. There is discrepancy in pay across the system, depending on the population served. It is important to correct the pay disparity among the different types of direct care workers.

Direct care workers for older clients receive no benefits and the lowest wages in direct care worker system. These employers have least ability to attract and retain workers.

Some agencies provide services to a large percentage of private pay clients. These agencies can offer a higher rate of pay to their workers.

**Turnover.** There is turnover, particularly among nurses aides. They might love their job, but they need to follow pay wherever it is higher. Long term care facilities sometimes lose out to agencies that pay higher. Uniformity of pay scale may help with the retention of workers.

**Health Care and Other Benefits.** There is the whole issue of health care and how we afford it. Why isn't there a system to provide an opportunity for collective health care benefits to be available for these smaller agencies? Couldn't this be

done at minimal cost, possibly as part of the Dirigo system? The State could help agencies provide benefits.

There are no funds to purchase insurance even at a collective rate. If any funds become available, workers want to see wages go up first. Wages are a higher priority than health care or retirement benefits.

If you are paid less than you can live on, pay is the key issue and all others are peripheral. Direct Care workers are just “trying” to get by. There should be “good” jobs and livable wages. The bottom line is that a person who needs a worker tomorrow can find a worker but not have one, because the worker cannot pay for gas.

**Value of Workers.** Direct care workers are not recognized for the valuable work they do. They should have more voice in care planning. There should be greater support for caregiver and worker participation in care planning. The complexity and skills needed for work should be reflected in the pay.

**Consumer Controlled Programs.** There should be more support for consumer controlled programs.

**Administrative Costs.** Any increase in rates for home care services should include mandatory administrative costs.

**Training.** Agencies train whoever they can, but they need more people. Wage scales need to correlate with training; this is one approach to retention. Direct care workers should be involved in designing/providing training. This is up to individual agencies right now. We should avoid duplication of training (e.g. medical and behavioral training). Has training kept up with changes in clients’ needs? We need to improve in-service training and make it more relevant.

**Middle Class.** The middle class is not poor enough for publicly funded care but they can’t afford to buy it. There should be a graduated system of payments.

**Information.** There should be access to information (e.g. via newsletter and advertising campaign) regarding the availability of services.

## C. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/VOLUNTEERISM

Facilitator: Len Kaye, Center on Aging, University of Maine

**Training.** There should be money for volunteer training.

**Payment for Volunteers?** Point: Volunteers should not be paid. Once they're paid they're no longer volunteers. Volunteers help keep costs down. It is more important to volunteer than to receive money. Counterpoint: Money is an issue for some volunteers. It is better for volunteers to receive a little pay than nothing.

**Job Descriptions; Media.** We should develop volunteer job descriptions and disseminate these through the media.

**Transportation.** People want to be asked to volunteer. They might have transportation issues.

**Migrating Older Persons.** What is the impact of migrating older persons on volunteers? We need to figure out how to engage this group.

**Focal Point.** There should be an office for volunteers. We need someone to help identify volunteer opportunities. There could be a clearinghouse for volunteers to conduct background checks on potential volunteers.

**Site Evaluation.** Volunteer sites should be evaluated, since volunteerism can be a smokescreen for ageism.

**Incentives.** More incentives are needed for volunteers. Americorps is an example. Volunteerism should become a line item deduction. How do we encourage people to do something for nothing? There could be recognition by state and local governments.

**Farm Share Program.** The Farm Share Program should be expanded. Farmers get seeds and people get shares toward buying produce.

**Mentoring.** There should be inter-generational and mentoring volunteer programs.

**Volunteer Credits.** Instead of cash, older volunteers should use volunteer credits they have earned toward needed services (e.g. nursing homes and elsewhere.)

**Meals on Wheels.** Meals on wheels are facing budget cuts. How do we raise awareness?

**Pool of Volunteers.** There is a tremendous pool of people waiting to do something.

**Promoting Esteem.** We should promote programs for senior esteem through volunteerism.

## D. CREATIVE HOUSING AND SERVICES

Facilitator: Janice Daku, Maine Keeping Seniors Home

**Security and Safety.** Older people want to have a secure/safe environment (e.g. deadbolt) and know if someone is invading their home. They want safety outside, such as stop signs for seniors in walkways because they are going to be slow.

It is difficult to remain safe and secure at home financially because of high property taxes. LD 2 freezes tax assessment of homes; there should be a freeze of property taxes. Baby boomers need to understand home equity loans.

We need to plan for emergency power, etc. (e.g. generator/gas stove).

**Federal Housing Policy.** We should push federal housing policy to keep seniors at home. Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy invested in building ghettos for seniors. There is a lack of Section 8 vouchers because everyone is encouraged to go into big housing complexes. Public policy is contradictory.

**Services.** There needs to be money for services, not just housing

**Information.** There needs to be more information about how to qualify for housing.

There needs to be more and clearer information on ground rules (e.g. ground rules on income when have housemates).

Information needs to be user-friendly. It is hard to get information, which is very discouraging. We need people at end of the phone line to answer questions about housing. There should be counseling for seniors about housing options.

**Choice; Options.** We need to promote choice (section 8 versus other programs). Section 8 money has been going into building, not just vouchers.

There need to be housing options in communities that are accessible to older people. Choices should include houses on one floor and houses closer to other

people. Some older people want to move from out in country to being around people.

Developers and planners should have more knowledge about what older people really want. There should be provisions for social and other activities.

**People with Alzheimer's.** We need housing for people with Alzheimer's. We need to talk about needs. The State needs to expand housing and the number of beds for people with Alzheimer's. There is are extensive waiting lists.

**Cooperative Models.** There are cooperative models for people to help out and share resources. How can we get this to happen in small towns? People can help each other, trade tasks, and share skills. Housing can be developed where people help people out. Developers might be interested in this.

**Immigration.** We need people from other countries to migrate to Maine to help provide services.

**Bored Men.** There is very little in senior housing for men to do in those small apartments.

**Assisted Living.** Assisted living is far too expensive.

**Repairs.** There is a need for repairs for older housing stock. We need to provide financial support aging agencies to make repairs.

**Coordinated Strategy.** The State should come up with a coordinated strategy for different ages and income about how to address this issues facing people with different needs.

**Marketing.** We should promote the elderly market more (e.g. senior housing, the modular home industry, wide doors).

**Shared Living.** There should be incentives for shared living. People can share a home with parents. There can be inter-generational living to share resources. There is no tax relief for inter-generational living. Unrelated generations can share living arrangements.

**Little Focus on Keeping People Home.** Housing is federal money. Less than 1% is spent on keeping people at home. The longer people stay at home the cheaper it is.

**Key Issues.** In summary, here are the key issues discussed by this group:

- There is a shortage of housing for people with Alzheimer's and others with special needs.
- There is a lack of resources for people with lower income.
- There are concerns about safety and security for many at home.
- There is a property tax assessment gap.
- Boomers should start planning.
- More education and information are needed.
- The State needs to coordinate housing programs and policies.
- More activities for men are needed.
- There should be housing activities that aren't isolated.
- Money is needed for repairs.
- Support is needed for accessible design.
- Cooperative models and trading services should be promoted.
- Support is needed for inter-generational housing arrangements.

<b>E. ELDER ABUSE</b>
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Facilitator: Nancy Kelleher, AARP Maine

**What's Missing?** This group reviewed recommendations from 15 community forums held in August. They discussed what was missing from the list.

**False Allegations.** Sometimes there are false allegations by persons who you may not be related to, who may have delusions or be confused, and who report that you have caused harm or broken the law.

**Abuse by Caregivers.** Caregiver burnout is one cause for elder abuse. Educate caregivers that it is a crime to abuse elders. Create a Caregivers' Anonymous hotline, so people can call in concerns about their own behavior without fear. (e.g. like Parents Anonymous).

**Governor's Educational Campaign.** There should be a powerful educational marketing campaign to highlight the problem of elder abuse in Maine. This should be led and supported by the highest government officials in the State of Maine. The Governor should lead a public service campaign pointing that 12,000 –14,000 elder Mainers are being abused. Both Attorney General Steve Rowe and Governor Baldacci should lead the challenge. The State needs to

take a LEADERSHIP role in the systems in providing pamphlets, posters and public service advertisements. There was only one pamphlet at the registration table for the Blaine House Conference on Aging. We need to better educate, inform one another, and put posters and pamphlets in ALL public places.

**Speaking Up for Us.** Speaking Up for Us of Maine has created a training video on understanding abuse and neglect of people, and how to avoid fraud and exploitation. It is suggested that they be contacted to provide training to individuals and groups.

**Check It Out.** The Attorney General's "Check It Out" program will point to scams we know of, but it was not those door-to-door "scams" where people appear at your door to help you with repairs and never complete the work. There should be a system in place, perhaps requiring paperwork and written documentation for agreeing to do work for elders.

**Legislation.** We should create laws that require contractors and home repair services to be registered.

**Background Checks.** There needs to be clarification about the laws requiring that criminal background checks to be done on ALL caregivers working with the elderly.

**Financial Exploitation.** There are several cases where seniors are financially exploited and coerced by family members through access and abuse of the elders' finances through credit cards, loans and accounts. The Maine Bar prohibits attorneys from preparing documents or wills from which they can benefit, however, it does occur. Legislative changes must be made to ensure that isolated seniors be protected from professionals who exploit them.

**Hotlines; Resources.** We should create a single hotline where abuse/exploitation concerns can be reviewed. It was noted that EldersOne is for that purpose. There needs to be a better way of identifying phone numbers; the phone book is hard to understand and find resources. There could be refrigerator magnets with information. The National Bar Association listserve is a resource.

**Education.** There should be better education for ALL health care providers, including PA's, NP's, nurses, dental and eye care. There should be a broad effort to educate all people who work with seniors about elder abuse and about where to go to report and get help.

**Types of Abuse.** We need to distinguish between mental abuse, physical abuse and financial abuse. Financial abuse is challenging to report because people feel responsible for it, stupid and don't want to tell others. Financial abuse often

comes before physical abuse and mental abuse begin. These are graduated forms of ABUSE OF POWER AND CONTROL.

**Assessment.** Health care providers should be required to assess all patients for abuse and ask EVERY time they come in for a visit. Caregivers should not be allowed to be present for the interview.

**Financial Abuse Protections.** The group discussed a number of financial abuse protections:

- Require finance institutions to be mandated reporters of financial exploitation of elders.
- Amend the improvident transfer law to include transfers that take place at the time of death.
- Prohibit attorneys from receiving bequests and gifts unless these are managed by independent counsel.

**Simplify.** Simplify reporting for everyone. Simplify where to call for help. Develop a simplified way of reporting abuse without retaliation.

**Task Force.** Create Task Force to work on enforcement of punishments.

## F. EMPLOYMENT

Facilitator: Jud Dolphin

**Review of Recommendations.** The group reviewed the 11 recommendations from the 15 community forums held in August. Each person circled 5 things that particularly resonated with him or her. They also identified things not on the list that should be.

**Ageism and Discrimination.** Even though one delegate had been a retail manager for years, a firm he applied to for a job would not offer him any more than minimum wage. His experience was not appreciated and he was not offered sufficient funds to entice him to take the job. The employer had a poor attitude. The cultural message was that the value of older workers is not appreciated. Employers will have to look for older workers as labor pool diminishes. Age discrimination among employers is rampant, particularly in parts of the country where there are younger workers

**Education.** Employers need to understand the value of older workers. There needs to be a public education campaign about the 'value added' of older workers. We need to talk about ageism and age discrimination. Eventually every employer will be in the shoes of an older worker. Older workers do good work and need to be appreciated. Many employers appreciate older workers but not enough do.

**Work Models.** Different models of work need to be explored, such as seasonal work and job sharing. Home Depot permits employees to switch job sites as they move around the country. The issue of flexible hours is important.

**Impact of Work on Benefits.** It is important to be able to work without losing benefits. This is mainly a federal issue. Perhaps the State should put pressure on the federal government needs to change the policies. All sorts of benefits are affected by federal policies and are income dependent. Losing housing is a problem; if income is too high, then you can lose housing. MaineCare (Medicaid) is a concern, too, because if you exceed a ceiling on income, you lose your benefits and once you lose them, then it is very hard to get them back.

**Commission.** There should be an ad hoc commission to compare Maine statutes with those of other states to see what might be changed in Maine by the Legislature. The commission could look at barriers, Medicaid usage, and other items that might benefit Mainers. Food Stamps and other public benefits should be looked at, as well. There needs to be an interface between public benefits and work. We may not be able to affect the federal laws, but we might be able to affect state policies.

**Internship.** Initiating an AmeriCorps-type internship might be a way to look at added income and benefits.

**Website.** There could be a senior website promoting positions that may be available. This also could include health information and other issues of interest to seniors. Could the Office of Elder Services do this? This could build on other efforts being undertaken.

Website usage is something that may not be useful for some older people due to problems with access. Maybe senior centers or libraries may have kiosks with this type of website information.

**Computer Skills.** In Boston, a group called ABLE, links older individuals to jobs. They claim that many older workers need to be computer literate to be eligible for the jobs now open. 'No senior left behind' would mean that all seniors would be trained in the use of computers, so all would be familiar with computer use.

What could the Department of Labor do to help make this happen? There are free programs available for training people on computers, but they are mostly available for people who have been laid off or have lost jobs.

There is a disconnect between technology and information and the people who need to have the information. It is a challenge to make information accessible to people who don't want to use computers.

**Inter-Generational Teaching.** What are going to do for those people who are afraid to use computers? Maybe we should hook up older people with younger people. Maybe public schools could contribute this by freeing up kids to teach older people how to use computers and maybe have the older people teach kids about work and work values...

**Retraining.** A program in Rockland is starting up a retraining program to help people learn new skills. Self-esteem is a major issue among older people trying to get back into the labor market.

**Career Centers.** Career centers have less incentive to employ people in part-time jobs and in low paying jobs because they get higher ratings for full-time job placement and higher paying work. This needs to be changed and maybe the commission can look at this.

**Job Sharing.** Job sharing is a way around meeting employers' needs as well as employees' needs. This needs to be explored more.

**Recognition.** AARP has 'senior friendly' values awards. LL Bean is one company being so recognized. We need to promote this notion more frequently to encourage employers to be 'seniors friendly'. Who should do this promoting? What can AARP do? What can the State do? What can area agencies on aging do? Maybe we can partner with Dana Connors of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce to get this done. Maybe we can use spots on TV.

**Self-Employment.** What about promoting self-employment and matching retired entrepreneurs with retired people who want work?

**Key Issues.** The group summarized the key issues they discussed. They organized them into three categories: employers, employees, or government.

- Launch a public education campaign about the value of seniors. (employers)
- Have a Maine senior.com website that promotes value of seniors. (government)

- Have a commission to look at new ideas and best practices for a senior friendly state. (government)
- Initiate a campaign to educate businesses to be senior friendly, e.g. flex hours. (employers)
- Implement “no senior left behind” trainings to ensure proficiency in new technologies. (government)
- Create a volunteer corps for seniors.
- Understand and mitigate the loss of public benefits that results from increased employment. (government)

## G. HEALTHY AGING

Facilitator: Peggy Haynes, MaineHealth’s Partnership for Healthy Aging

**Overview.** Falls are the leading cause of injuries for older adults. Nutrition and hydration critically important. Prevention is very important. Prevention will save a lot more money, rather than after-the-fact. Mental health and health should be considered in tandem. We need to have sound a mind and a sReound body.

**Knowledge about What’s Available.** Social networking is not there. Senior citizens don’t know what’s available to them. SeniorsPlus in Wilton is fabulous. Lots of people are isolated.

**Over-Drugged.** Senior citizens often are over-drugged. This can cause falls and ailments. This should be the #1 issue.

**Promises, Services, Programs.** Promises must be kept, services must be provided, and programs must come from the community. Each community knows exactly what their community needs.

In Blue Hill, for example, some people have help come in 5 days/week. One person stays with mother 6 days/week; they need a companion. Services should be on a sliding scale, so that upper and middle income families are eligible to avail themselves of these services.

**Affordable Drugs.** We need more affordable prescription drugs. Sometimes it’s a choice between food and medications. We must live within our means. The amount of regulation increases the expense of service delivery.

**Education.** There should be education about healthy aging both for seniors and their families. When families are aware of educational programs, then they work

with the seniors, and provide encouragement. Families often don't have information the programs that are available.

**Matter of Balance.** Seniors must think positively and think that they are not going to fall. We need to push the Matter of Balance program.

**Information.** Medicare D sign-up will happen again. Help Desk staff should be trained to provide information about other programs. We should develop some synergy among outreach programs. There should be integration of efforts. Help Desk staff should ask if callers could be placed on a mailing list to receive additional information later about other types of relevant issues.

Every community has a weekly publication. They welcome these kinds of articles, e.g. "Somerset County Senior Citizens".

A recent expo had nothing about Matter of Balance and little on nutrition.

**Simplify Forms.** All insurance companies should simplify the forms.

**Mental Health.** There's a silent group of those experiencing depression or substance abuse. They don't have a voice, so they don't get many services.

**Key Issues.** The group summarized key issues discussed:

- Mental and physical wellness.
- Prevention Programs—What goes into prevention?
- Outreach and communication, education around services.
- Medication and overuse of drugs.

## I. TRANSPORTATION

Facilitator Steve Farnham, Aroostook Agency on Aging

**Increase Availability and Access.** There should be a reliable bus system that runs on a regular basis. The Linc system is wheelchair accessible. This should be for people of low income and should be free based on age and income. Access is needed in rural areas. Make this available now.

**Expand Transportation Methods.** Methods of transportation should be decided on the personal level/regional level. We do not want to exclude volunteer drivers.

**Develop Ongoing Financial Support.** Provide public education to seniors regarding transportation availability. Use an informational clearinghouse to help communicate to consumers in the community. [Also, get physicians involved with the family to tell elders that they are no longer able to drive.]

**Strategically Plan.** Strategically identify and plan for transportation services based on needs and trends. Look at the entire transportation network, including a transportation survey and including service to private homes. Also, liability needs to be addressed.

**Support Volunteer Role.** The Legislature should provide funding to help towns to develop a volunteer base. They should leave it up to the towns to decide how to manage this. If a volunteer donates time, then liability is not an issue because this falls under the Good Samaritan Act. The volunteer's own automobile insurance covers passengers. If no money changes hands, the volunteer is indemnified under Good Samaritan Act. All drivers are required to meet Maine's insurance requirements. That is the first line of protection. This is considered a personal use of a vehicle. There are different elements when vehicle use is for other than personal or pleasure purposes.

The Insurance Superintendent issued an opinion to Aroostook Area Agency on Aging (AAAA) that as long as a volunteer is not doing the driving as a substantial part of usage of that vehicle, personal insurance would apply. If a person uses the vehicle for commercial use, the individual is required to pay commercial rate. For example, compensation in excess of 10,000 miles per year would require commercial rate. Then excess liability is needed. AAAA recommends 100, 300, 100 limits.

**Have Affordable Transportation Solutions.** The Governor's budget should include an item for senior transportation. Suggestions could include school buses. Medicaid could pay a portion. Transportation should be available regardless of income. Those with ability to pay, can pay. It should be handled on a community basis.

**Use School Buses.** Since the elderly want to make the most out of tax dollars, allow them to use the school bus system. Some schools contract out for transportation. Practically all communities are served by a school bus. There should be integrated systems to use buses the most effectively and efficiently.

Senior centers and retirement communities can use them. The drivers, safety record, and training are already in place. School buses may require increased local taxes. Fees need to be involved, unless a person can't afford it.

There should be regular routes in small towns and communities from 9:00 to 1:30. There should be a regular schedule. A lot of school buses don't have wheelchair accessibility, but most school systems have smaller buses available, which are more economical, with wheelchair lifts for students with disabilities.

If each town is responsible to develop a plan, each can plan according to local needs and resources.

**Washington County.** A bus is needed in Washington County for the elderly to go to Bangor for chemotherapy and for pleasure trips. Washington County is very poor. There should be a weekly schedule, and the driver needs to be paid.

**Publicly Funded Transportation System.** The Governor and the Legislature should integrate existing systems to make them work better for the elderly and disabled. Funds should be reallocated or appropriated to make this happen. There should be networks that include some volunteer and some paid transportation methods. Financing needs to be studied and supported.

**Transportation Tsar.** A transportation tsar under the Governor is needed to study the problem of transportation for older persons and to be in command of the elder transportation budget.

## J. Common Themes

**Overview.** Notes from the eight small group sessions at the Blaine House Conference on Aging revealed that there are common themes across the groups. Two major areas of interest that recurred frequently are *better communication* and *increased public education*. The small groups on caregivers, housing and creative services, and transportation noted that the lack of communication about available services is a huge barrier to receiving needed services. Delegates who attended the sessions on healthy aging and elder abuse noted that they needed increased education about each of their issues. Another issue that came up across the board was *increased funding* for programs.

**Communication.** Suggestions relating to communication:

- Provide information about programs and services available (caregivers—paid).
- Develop an office on volunteerism (community involvement/ volunteerism).
- Provide information about how to qualify for housing and about ground rules for housemates (creative housing).

- Create a senior website to promote available positions (employment).
- Engage in a public education campaign about value of seniors (employment).
- Make information available to people who do not use computers (employment).
- Share information about programs that promote healthy aging (healthy aging).
- Create an informational clearinghouse for people in the community about different transportation options (transportation).

**Information/Education.** Suggestions relating to information/public education:

- Conduct an educational campaign about hospice, dying with dignity, and family supports, (caregivers—paid)
- Baby boomers need to understand home equity loans, (creative housing)
- Make information on housing user-friendly, (creative housing)
- Launch a public service campaign on elder abuse led by Governor Baldacci. (elder abuse).
- Use the Speaking up for Us of Maine training video (elder abuse).
- Expand the Attorney General's "Check it Out" program (elder abuse).
- Provide better education for all health care providers (elder abuse).

**Funding.** Suggestions relating to funding include:

- Housing is federal money (creative housing).
- The Governor's budget should include a line item specifically for senior transportation (transportation).
- There should be publicly funded transportation systems that address the needs of older persons. (transportation).
- Create tax incentives for people who volunteer. (community involvement/volunteerism)
- Freeze property taxes. (creative housing)

## V. Other Good Food for Thought

**Idea Cards.** Idea cards were sprinkled liberally around the Blaine House Conference on Aging. Delegates were invited to use these to write down any ideas at all. Here are comments from these cards:

- Physical activity – Exercise available for seniors – maybe at senior sites- even chair exercises. No involvement of equipment or money. Especially for small towns like Kennebunk.
- Pay more attention to plain language. Not sure all attendees know what median age means.
- Set a good example for safety by not having dangerous extension cords strung across breakout rooms.
- Begin a discussion at the state level about cost control in our health care industry.
- Please print off the name and addresses of the attendees from the conference. We'd like to stay in touch.
- Provide more pink cards (for ideas).
- Institutions should be built on level ground to provide a safe walking area for wheelchair and walkers not the hills of Maine.
- Insurance – Long-term care insurance companies must provide plans that provide alternatives if the plan is not used for care.
- My suggestion is that you raffle the potato basket or just give it to the oldest person at the Blaine House Conference.
- There must be a solution – A friend of mine raised 6 children as a single parent and went to school to help support these children, at a later age. Now is physically unable to work; has barely enough money to meet basic needs. On paper it looks like I am doing fine but before I receive social security, my student loan money is taken out. Her request for Christmas gifts from her children is: Laundry detergent, dish detergent, sanitary napkins, toilet paper, etc. among other basic needs. Her children abhor this idea. But she said why not? I really needs these items and don't have money for them. This doesn't even mention money for food. I've been working toward getting her to the food pantry but pride stands in the way. She doesn't want a handout. She is about ready to make this move. The biggest problem is the student loan money. Could it be waived somehow?
- We need to make a real effort to welcome out-of-staters if we wish to increase our population

**"The Face of Aging in Maine"**. A printed version of "The Face of Aging in Maine", the Blaine House Conference on Aging keynote presentation by Laurie Lachance, accompanies these proceedings of the conference. The presentation also is available electronically on the Office of the Office of Elder Services' website at [http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/bhcoa\\_2006.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/bhcoa_2006.htm)

**Issue Briefs on Eight Topics.** The following is a list of issue briefs received by those who attended the Blaine House Conference on Aging. One was written for each of the eight topics discussed by the small groups. To request a printed copy of any of the briefs, please contact: Office of Elder Services, 442 Civic Center Drive, 11 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333; 207-287-9200. The issue briefs are also available electronically at the Office of Elder Services' website at [http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/bhcoa\\_2006.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/beas/bhcoa_2006.htm)

**Civic Engagement**

by Paula Burnett & Andrew Matlins

**Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation**

by Jason C. Charland

**Healthy Aging**

by Mary Walsh, Peggy Haynes, Chris Sady  
& Matt L'Italien

**Housing and Service Options for Older Adults in Maine**

by Julie Fralich & Kate Maggioncalda

**Informal Caregiving**

by Julie Ann Scott

**Maine's Aging Economy and the Economy of Aging**

by Charles S. Colgan

**Meeting Maine's Need for Front Line Workers in Long-term Care and Service Options**

By Lisa Pohlmann

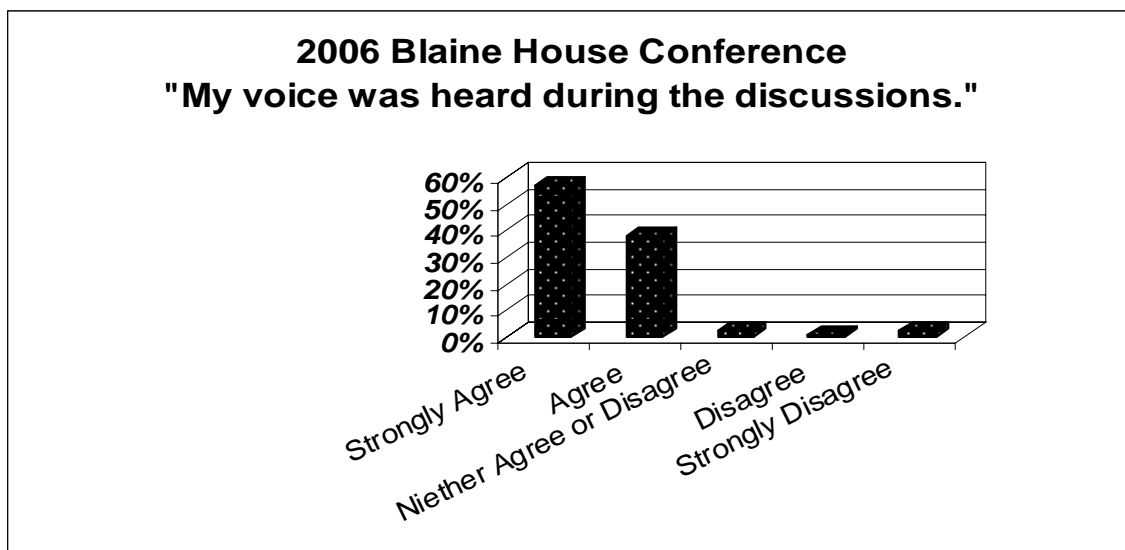
**Transportation**

by Jason C. Charland

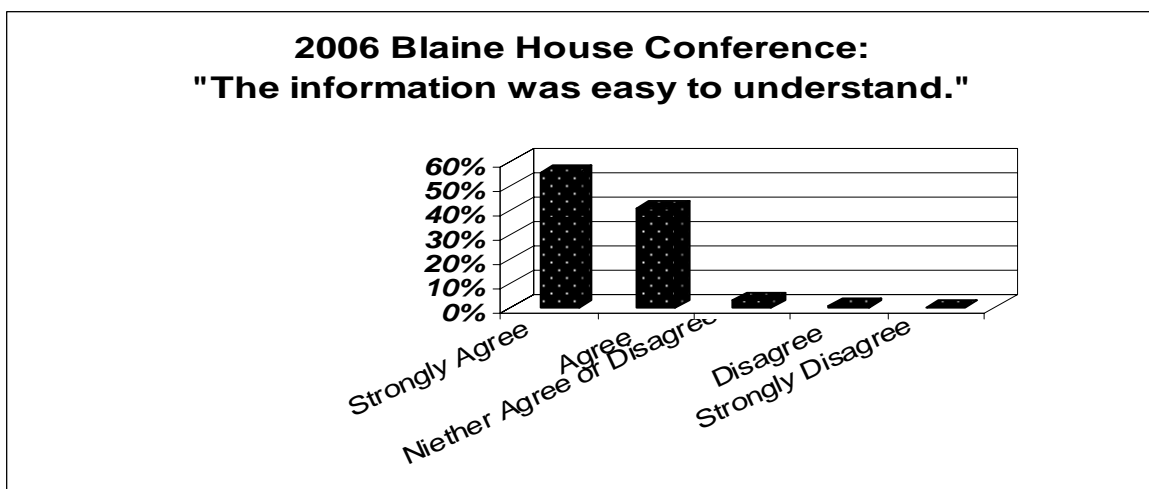
## VI. Evaluation of Blaine House Conference on Aging

Evaluations from the 2006 Blaine House Conference on Aging indicate it was a success. Of the more than 200 people who attended the conference on September 21, 2006, 130 submitted an evaluation at the end of the day. The results are summarized below. If you would like to review all of the comments offered in addition to this summary, please contact: Office of Elder Services, 442 Civic Center Drive, 11 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333; 207-287-9200.

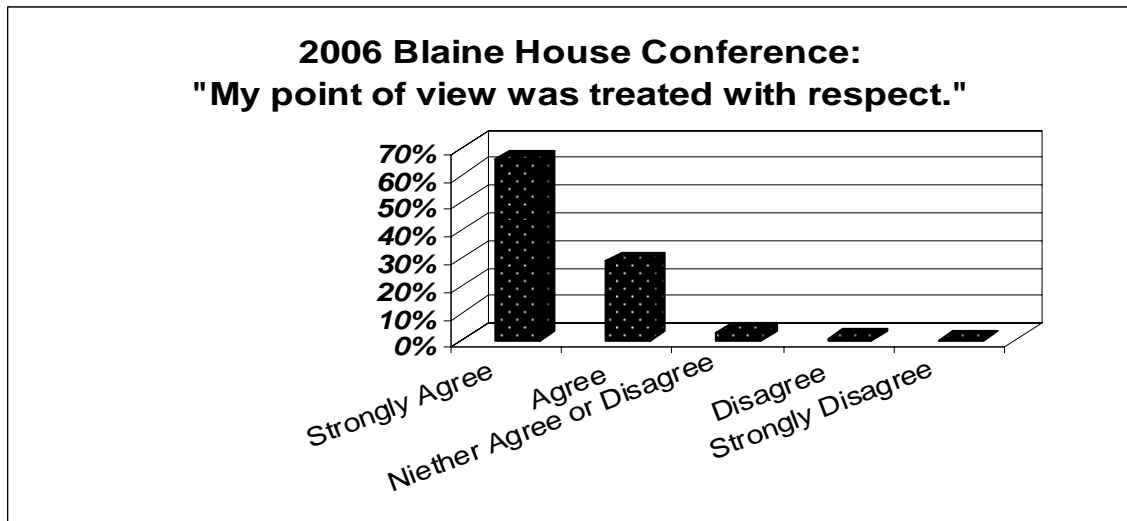
95% of respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their voice was heard during the discussions of the day.



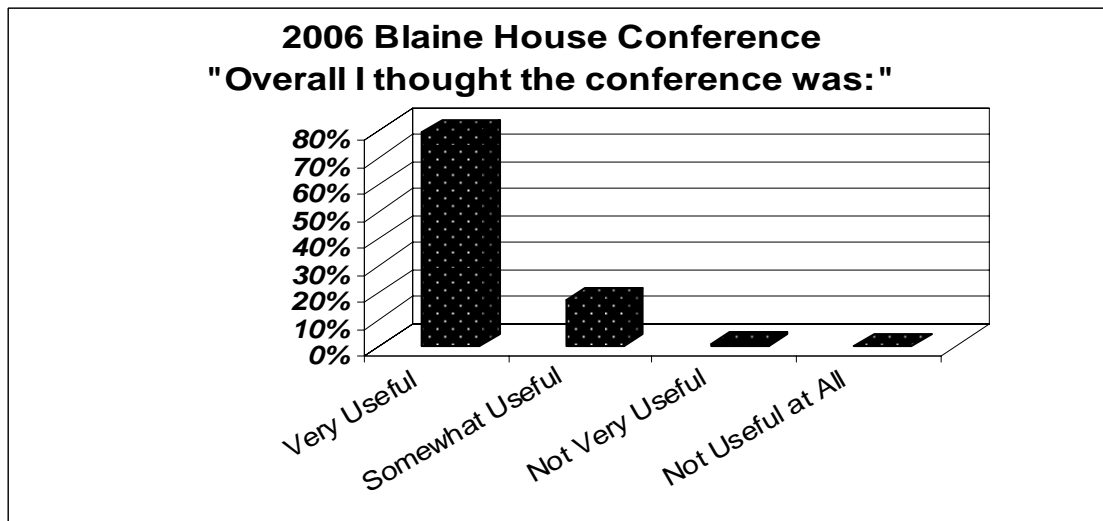
According to 96% of respondents, the information presented throughout the conference was easy to understand.



93% of respondents felt their opinions were respected.



79% of respondents felt the conference as "Very Useful", while 17% felt it was "Somewhat Useful."



Participants were asked to explain what they liked most about the conference. Of 127 comments, the majority indicated they liked the organization and format of the conference (31%). Second to that was the diversity of ideas and people present at the conference (17%).

**What did you like best?**

Valued the opportunity to advocate and be heard	6%
Key note speaker	13%
Organization and format of the conference	31%
Diversity of ideas and people at the conference	17%
Materials and Information Available at the conference	11%
Opportunity for open discussion and networking	11%
Atmosphere of the conference	7%
Governor's Speech	2%
Happy the conference occurred at all	2%

Other comments included:

- "One of the best run and facilitated conferences I've attended. There was representation by ordinary people from across the state."
- "Aside from the good information, hearing the voices of people who aren't heard from too frequently."
- "I liked that everyone was greeted and welcomed. Every person who gathered here was treated with respect."
- "Hearing the voices of many throughout the state who are working hard on behalf of Maine's 'Seasoned Citizens.' A real educational experience for me."

Of the 71 responses to "What did you least like about the conference?" , 30% indicated on their survey either "Nothing," "No Comment" or "everything was good." 21% of people wanted more time for the conference and 11% of people wanted less procedural talk.

**What did you like least?**

Space/Location	7%
Ideas generated	3%
Lack of Time	21%
Could only participate in one session	7%
Wrote Nothing, no comment, or "everything was good"	30%
Lack of breaks	15%
Too much procedural talk (chair person, podium, instructions, etc.)	11%
Other	6%

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