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Senior Citizens JH

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

MESSAGE ON OLDER AMERICANS

In his message, the President outlines a comprehensive strategy for the complex problems faced by older Americans.

There are 5 major elements:

1. Improving the income position of older Americans.
2. Upgrading the quality of nursing homes.
3. Helping older Americans lead dignified, independent lives in their own homes.
4. Expanding opportunities for the involvement of older persons in community life.
5. Organizing the Government to meet the changing needs of older Americans.

In 1973, the Federal Government will spend an estimated \$50 billion on behalf of older Americans, nearly 50% more than in 1969. One example of increased concern for the elderly is the increase in overall Federal spending under the Older Americans Act; spending under this Act has risen from \$32 million in 1969 to a proposed \$157 million as announced in the 1973 budget. The President is recommending a further increase of \$100 million for nutrition and related services. This will bring total spending in 1973 to \$257 million -- an eight fold increase.

1. IMPROVING THE INCOME
POSITION OF OLDER AMERICANS

- . The President has signed into law social security increases amounting to more than a 26 percent rise since 1969 -- a \$10 billion annual increase in income for the elderly. When the proposed 5% benefit increase in H.R. 1 is enacted, the increase in a 2 1/2 year period would be one-third, the largest such increase in the history of social security.
- . In his message the President urges Congress to enact the new income benefits for older Americans contained in H.R. 1, which would total \$5 1/2 billion when fully effective. This includes \$3 billion in increased social security benefits and \$2 1/2 billion in new benefits for the needy elderly.
- . Other important reforms contained in H.R. 1 include the first national income floor for older Americans; guaranteed inflation-proof social security benefits; a modified retirement earnings test to allow an individual to earn more after retirement without losing social security benefits; increased benefits for delayed retirement; and special minimum benefits for people who have worked for 15 or more years under social security.

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- . The President will propose a program to increase the incomes of military retirees and improve the military retirement system. This includes re-computing retired pay on the basis of January, 1971 military pay scales, and improving the protection of survivors of retired personnel.
- . Older veterans are benefiting from improved medicare care for veterans. In fiscal year 1973, 844,000 veterans will be treated in VA hospitals, and approximately one-fourth of these veterans will be over age 65. Veterans' pensions were increased by an average of 10 percent in calendar year 1971 and are being increased by another 6 1/2 percent in 1972.
- . Benefits for retired Federal employees and their families have been improved by increasing annuities as the cost of living rises, and by liberalizing health and other retirement benefits.
- . The President has submitted a program to reform and expand private pension programs, through:
 - tax deductions to encourage independent savings toward retirement;
 - more generous tax deductions for self-employed persons;
 - vesting of pensions to insure that persons who have worked for an employer for a significant period will retain their pension rights;
 - management of pension funds exclusively in the interest of beneficiaries; and
 - a one-year study of pension plan terminations by the Departments of Labor and Treasury.
- . The President announced (August 1971) a New Economic Policy to help reduce inflationary pressures that are so harmful to older Americans receiving relatively fixed incomes.
- . The President reaffirmed his commitment to relieve the burden of property taxes.
- . Recent and pending changes in income tax laws would provide special help to older persons (a single person aged 65 or older would be able to receive up to \$5,100 of income without paying any Federal income taxes, while a married couple with both husband and wife 65 or older would be able to earn up to \$8,000 of such tax free income.)
- . The President directs his Office of Consumer Affairs to develop recommendations for further action to make older citizens aware of their legal rights under the Interstate Land Sales Full Disclosure Act and to help the States develop consumer education programs specifically designed for older citizens.
- . The President's comprehensive health proposals also can reduce the burden of health costs on the elderly: He has:

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- Requested that the monthly \$5.80 Medicare supplementary premium fee be eliminated, yielding older persons \$1.5 billion.
- Urged several measures contained in H.R. 1 to reduce health costs for older Americans, including extending Medicare to many of the disabled who have been forced to retire early, enabling Medicare beneficiaries to enroll in Health Maintenance Organizations, and clarifying coverage for extended care facilities after hospitalization.

2. UPGRADING THE QUALITY OF NURSING HOMES

The President announced an 8-point plan to upgrade the quality of nursing homes in August of 1971. The Administration has:

- . Trained almost 450 State nursing home inspectors in Federally-sponsored programs;
- . Submitted legislation to provide 100 percent Federal funding of State Medicaid inspections of nursing homes;
- . Established an Office of Nursing Home Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare;
- . Increased Medical Services Administration personnel by 142 positions to enforce Medicaid standards and regulations;
- . Funded a short-term training program for nursing home personnel (20,000 in fiscal year 1972; 21,000 in fiscal year 1973.);
- . Designated Social Security district offices to receive and investigate nursing home complaints;
- . Initiated a comprehensive analysis of the issues related to long-term care; and
- . Improved the enforcement of nursing home standards, including the decertification of 13 substandard nursing homes.

3. ENHANCING THE INDEPENDENCE OF OLDER AMERICANS

To help older Americans lead dignified, independent lives in their own homes, the President:

- . Increased the 1972 budget of the Administration on Aging to \$100 million for 1973 -- to provide home-maker, transportation, nutrition and community services. He will request an additional \$100 million for funding of increased nutrition and related services.
- . Called for indefinite extension of the Older Americans Act and proposed amendments to strengthen service delivery:

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- HEW would increase its financial support for the State Agencies on Aging and fund up to 90% of services costs and up to 75% of the administrative costs of new Area Planning Agencies on Aging.
- State and Area Planning Agencies would plan to mobilize wide range resources -- public and private -- to enhance the independence of older citizens.

- . Announced new procedures for interagency coordination of Federal resources which aid older persons. Under these procedures Federal agencies will identify each year that portion of their resources they expect to spend the next year to help older persons meet their needs. State Agencies on Aging will use this information for more effective planning and delivery of services.
- . Set up a system whereby nearly 900 Social Security district offices will provide information on benefits available to the elderly;
- . Asked the Domestic Council Committee on Aging to examine ways to use other government offices -- such as the General Services Administration's Federal Information Centers and the Agricultural Extension Service's local offices -- to expand the information and complaint centers;
- . Will launch an outreach campaign (Project FIND) to increase the participation of eligible older persons in the food assistance programs of the Department of Agriculture (i.e., food stamps and surplus commodities). The campaign will be conducted through a network of existing Federally operated or funded field offices and outreach workers;
- . Urged action on the recent legislative proposal of the Secretary of Transportation that some of the Highway Trust Fund be used to finance mass transportation and asked the Secretary of Transportation to develop specific suggestions for helping States and localities use a portion of these resources for the elderly.
- . Announced that the Department of Transportation will give priority to community requests for capital grants that aid the elderly from the Urban Mass Transportation Fund. The President urges States and localities to move immediately to take advantage of available resources.
- . Made housing money more readily available for older Americans. In fiscal year 1972 and fiscal year 1973 HUD will reach an all-time record in producing specially designed, subsidized and insured housing and nursing homes.
 - 66,000 units of HUD-subsidized housing units specially designed for the elderly are planned for fiscal year 1972 and an estimated 82,000 for fiscal year 1973.
 - 14,000 units under the Nursing Home and Intermediate Care Facility Program, are planned in fiscal year 1972 and an estimated 18,000 in fiscal year 1973.

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HUD has also issued guidelines to make the Section 236 subsidized rental program more responsive to the needs of the elderly and to provide technical assistance to non-profit sponsors under the Section 106(a) program.

- Announced that HUD will extend the mortgage maturity for the FHA insured nursing home program to a maximum of 40 years -- enabling sponsors to "package" residential and nursing home complexes more easily.
- Requested HUD to work with the Administration on Aging to develop training programs in the management of housing for the elderly.
- Directed the Secretary of HUD to encourage more space for senior centers in subsidized housing projects for the elderly.

4. EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

To expand opportunities for more older Americans to make meaningful contributions in all facets of society, the President:

- Proposed legislation to expand ACTION's person-to-person volunteer programs to permit low-income elderly persons to work with children of special need in community settings and with older Americans in nursing homes and in the community.
- Supported a national effort of volunteer organizations designed to help the elderly to remain in their own homes.
- Tripled the Retired Senior Volunteers Program, to \$15 million, to involve 75,000 volunteers.
- Doubled the Foster Grandparents Program to \$25 million, providing for 11,500 foster grandparents to serve 23,000 children per day.
- Doubled the special job projects for older persons, such as Green Thumb and Senior Aides, to \$26 million, to involve as many as 10,000 older persons.
- Will propose legislation to broaden the coverage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act to include the fastest growing area of employment -- the State and local governments.
- Directed the Secretary of Labor to work on expanding employment opportunities for persons over 65 by urging the States and local communities to include older Americans in jobs provided by the Emergency Employment Act of 1971 and working with public employment offices to help open job opportunities in both the public and private sectors.
- Will send a directive to heads of Federal departments and agencies to emphasize the policy that age shall be no bar to a Federal job which an individual is otherwise qualified to perform.

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5. ORGANIZING THE GOVERNMENT

To better coordinate present and future efforts for older Americans, the President has:

- . Created a new Domestic Council cabinet level committee on aging, chaired by HEW Secretary Richardson.
- . Created the position of Special Assistant on Aging, John Martin.
- . Appointed a Special Consultant on Aging, Arthur Flemming.

To augment these efforts the Administration will:

- . Strengthen the Secretary of HEW's Advisory Committee on Older Americans -- providing it with permanent staff to support its increased responsibilities.
- . Arrange to have the Chairman of the Advisory Committee report directly to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.
- . Create a Technical Advisory Committee on Aging Research reporting to the Advisory Committee to develop a comprehensive plan of social, psychological, health, education, and economic research in HEW affecting the aged.

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Some would have us believe that old people are out of step with modern society, that they are unable to keep up with the hectic pace of modern technology, that they are confused by everything and should get out of the way of young, progressive ideas.

But I disagree. There is great danger in lumping all people over the age of 50 into one great mass. Maybe some people do become confused and unable to keep up the pace as they grow older. But I am sure you know, as I do, many young people also are confused by our society and choose to drop out rather than try to understand.

The fallacy of generalizing about all people over the age of 50 is easily seen by looking around: in every phase of private business, where owners and employees by the thousands continue working actively well into their seventies; in government--city, county, state and federal--where people work right up to the mandatory retirement age and then donate their services as volunteer consultants for years afterward; in volunteer organizations, in which many of you have participated, where men and women in their eighties and nineties continue to serve their society faithfully and well. I firmly believe that Senior Californians are not out of touch with the Space Age. The fact is, they are the architects of the Space Age.

It is my hope and desire that each Senior Californian will have a retirement that is satisfying and productive--a retirement

with dignity and self-respect.

For example, we have worked diligently to end discrimination because of age in the area of employment. This task is, of course, still far from completion, but great strides are being made.

California has become the first state in the nation to create a state civil service classification specifically for the purpose of hiring senior citizens on a part-time basis to work in their own communities in finding solutions to the problems of housing, employment, medical care, nutrition and education.

California has attracted nationwide attention for its volunteer recognition program, the Senior Californian Service Corps. And property tax relief for senior citizens is now a reality because of the efforts of this Administration.

We have made significant progress in these and many other fields. Yet much remains to be done.

There is still not enough housing available for those on limited, fixed incomes. There are still not enough jobs available for those with talent and energy who seek them. There are many who feel alone and forgotten.

We in government cannot provide all the remedies, solve all the problems and meet all the needs--nor should we. A truly Creative Society cannot be built on the efforts of government alone. All members of our society must work together. When both government and the independent sector think and act creatively as a team--neither one telling the other what it must do but rather what each can do to reach the same goal--then there is no problem we cannot solve.

As citizens, you and I have a responsibility to use our talents and resources to the best of our abilities. And, if we do, California will continue to be the greatest state in the nation.