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Edward *Milwaukee*
ms Rose Grabe
Chr

SPEECH EXCERPTS: PROGRAM FOR AGED

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More adequate income, decent housing, better health care, and a dignified place in society for nearly 16 million citizens over 65, 20 million over 60, are among the most important problems currently facing the nation.

The next President of the United States must be determined to meet this challenge -- and he will if the country elects a Democrat who really care about people.

From the standpoint of decency, compassion, and economic utilization of our human resources, we simply cannot relegate some 10 percent of our population to mere existence at sub-standard levels.

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If we continue to relegate old people to the sidelines -- financially, medically, and socially -- the financial burden to this country just in terms of institutions for the aging will be too fantastic to contemplate.

We need to be more aware of what is happening to our population. In 1900 there were only 3 million Americans over the age of 65. Today there are nearly 16 million, and in 10 years there will be an estimated 20 million.

If this dramatic trend continues, today's problems of the aging will seem like minor ripples as compared with the floods of tidal

proportions to come.

This population boom amounts to a national crisis because of the role we tend to assign to 'older men and women'

We have made it possible for more people to live into the so-called 'golden years', but without adequate incomes, health care, housing, and without a recognized role in the community life of the nation.

Estimates of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare reveal that it costs at least \$2,300 a year for a couple to live by themselves in an urban center in modest fashion.

Yet over half of the couples who live in this country have less than this amount of income.

The average couple on social security receives about \$1,440 a year if they are both retired.

On an individual basis, 60 percent of those over 65 have less than \$1,000 a year in money income.

Even more desperate is the income situation of the 1.3 million aging widows now receiving an average social security benefit of \$56 per month, because their benefits are fixed at 75 percent of the amount which had been paid to the husband, now deceased.

The income of a large proportion of these nearly 16 million Americans over 65 ranges from mere subsistence to desperation and despair. While man does not live by bread alone, a decent and responsible economic base is essential for a creative American life.

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The aim of any 'realistic' program for our older citizens must be to permit them to live in dignity, security, and with a sense of usefulness.

What we need is a many-sided program which insures their productiveness, their independence and self-reliance, and prevents physical and moral decay.

Let me suggest six steps as a start in this direction. They include:

1. Increase social security benefits "to keep pace with living costs."
2. Increase from \$1200 to \$1800 the amount which social security beneficiaries may earn without losing benefits.
3. Extend the social security system to cover the cost of hospital and nursing home care for older citizens.

4. Establish improved minimum federal standards which states must meet on old-age assistance programs.
5. Allow a tax credit incentive to encourage the hiring of older workers.
6. Provide effective federal assistance for specialized housing programs for the aged.

I am sponsoring legislation for such purposes in the Senate.

Even this is only a start. There are many other things which the Congress can and should do. We need to provide more funds for medical research to study diseases which affect older people in particular, and we need to build more and better hospitals to provide adequate facilities for treatment of the expanding aged population.



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