

Penney

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SENIOR CITIZENS RALLY

St. Petersburg, Florida
February 29, 1972

The time has come for this nation to recognize that its 20 million elderly citizens are not a special class of people.

The time has come to recognize that their needs are not privileges -- but rights. Not something to be given by a generous society, but something to be provided all Americans regardless of age.

If our senior citizens are forgotten today it is because this nation has failed to back up words with a commitment of resources. It is time we had a President who is willing to stand up and say to you:

-- It is wrong that five million of you live in poverty.

-- It is wrong that millions of you don't have transportation to go to the places you want and need to go.

-- It is wrong that you live in fear because the police seem to have forgotten the elderly.

-- It is wrong that you are strapped by high property taxes, sales taxes, and all the other financial burdens that eat up a fixed income.

-- It is wrong that you can't get good hospital and doctor care. And when you can, it is too expensive.

-- It is wrong that you aren't given adequate job training and employment opportunities to continue as productive members of society.

-- It is wrong that you can't afford to buy a house because their prices are outrageous, and

-- It is wrong that young and middle age Americans too often treat you as second class citizens after you have given so much to them and your country.

Not only should a President stand up and say these things, but he must also say: "I'm going to correct these wrongs. I'm going to ask the Congress and the nation to join with me in giving a new deal to the elderly citizens of America."

These unspoken words are the main reason why too many of our elderly citizens spend their remaining years of their lives in solitude.

Today I want to outline an action program that will at last change the underfunded and fragmented programs which are supposed to help older Americans but always fall short of the mark.

I believe that the nation's first priority is to lift out of poverty 5.4 million elderly Americans.

These Americans account for 25 percent of the nation's poor -- but they make up only 10 percent of our population.

And during the past three years, approximately 100,000 citizens have been added to the large numbers of elderly poor. In 1970, 51 percent of older women living alone fell below the poverty level. By the end of last year, that number had jumped to 63 percent.

Statistics can't tell of the tragedies of poverty -- the tragedy of ill-health, poor diets, shabby apartments, fear of being a crime victim, and just simple loneliness.

We can change this intolerable situation. I will soon offer legislation to increase the minimum monthly payment to Old Age, Blind and Disabled recipients to a federally funded level of \$165 for a single individual and \$215 for a couple -- effective January 1, 1972.

Now there is no federal minimum. Now each state determines the level it will pay.

My amendment would guarantee that every eligible elderly individual could avoid the degradation of poverty with a fixed minimum income.

This amendment makes it a national policy that there will be no elderly poor.

But this is not enough.

Adequate incomes for elderly Americans cannot become a reality until we reform our social security system.

Too many millions of social security beneficiaries reach old age in disappointment and despair.

The hard-earned money put aside in the hope of obtaining an adequate retirement income proves instead to be a poverty payment.

And we all know that inadequate social security benefits -- more than any single factor -- are the cause for the continuing hardship of millions of elderly.

A fixed social security income can't fight inflation. And you have diminishing purchasing power.

It can't fight rising property and sales taxes. And you may have to give up your home.

It can't fight excessive medical, food and housing costs and you may not go to the doctor, buy the food you need or the house you deserve.

I propose we take the following steps immediately:

One, we guarantee a \$100 minimum benefit and a 25 percent immediate increase in social security benefits with a cost of living escalator to provide elderly citizens with a weapon to fight inflation.

Two, we must take one-third of the cost of social security benefits from the federal treasury. This would cut the payroll tax workers now pay by two thirds. Working people would save an average of \$175 a year.

Three, we must increase from \$1,680 to \$3,000 the amount of money older Americans can earn before they begin to have reduced benefits. Too many senior citizens quit their jobs for fear of losing social security checks.

Four, we must not reduce benefits if older Americans marry. I have been told of phony divorces taking place so that elderly people can avoid economic disaster. Marriage should not reduce your benefits. I pledge myself to halt this inequity which forces many senior citizens to live against their moral code.

Finally, I see no reason why a widow or widower should receive anything less than 100 percent of his or her spouse's benefits. To provide only 82 percent as is now done is grossly unfair.

Social security reform is only the first step to more productive and decent lives for elderly Americans. With these five basic proposals we have solved only part of the problem.

The next step is to make major changes in medicare.

You pay on the average \$800 a year in medical expenses.

Let's face it, the costs of good medical care are still a great burden for all of you -- despite medicare.

Here is what we must do now to cut the financial burdens of medical care:

First, I have introduced legislation to have medicare pay the full cost of your prescription drugs, the full cost of eye glasses, hearing aids, & dental care. Why should medicare pick up only part of the costs of staying healthy? And why should anyone go to a doctor and then be unable to afford the medicine he prescribes? This is wrong.

Second, we should eliminate the \$50 deductible for supplementary medical insurance.

Mr. Nixon and his Republican friends want to increase this unfair charge. I say there is no reason for the poor and the elderly to pay the first \$50 out of their own pockets when some can't afford to pay for transportation into town.

Third, I want to eliminate the insurance premium you have to pay for doctors insurance.

Fourth, I intend to offer legislation that will freeze your share of hospital co-payments -- they are high enough now and the Nixon Administration's planned increases are unfair.

I am also going to introduce an expanded comprehensive Home Health Care Program to be paid for by medicare.

There is no reason you must go to the hospital and clinic for every illness. Care should be available where you live -- in your homes or apartments, not in a remote hospital.

These are the steps we must take now.

Medicare reform is only makeshift reform. What is truly needed is a comprehensive National Health Security Program for every American. This is the only real answer.

But we must also correct this system which now says: we recognize some of your needs but we will not give you what you are due by right -- decent and healthy life.

The time has come to stop penalizing Americans when they grow old and when they get sick.

We need action now on all of these fronts; increased old age assistance, increases in railroad retirement and social security benefits, and medicare reform.

But we cannot move forward with these great tasks without strong efforts from the leadership of this nation to change the attitudes of young and middle aged people toward the elderly.

Until we make this nation realize that life does not stop at 60, or 65, we will not have provided the basic dignity, identity, and security that elderly Americans need and deserve.

As Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Enough promises have been made. The time has come for action and national commitment.

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REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

SENIOR CITIZENS RALLY

TAMPA, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 29, 1972

THE TIME HAS COME FOR THIS NATION TO RECOGNIZE THAT
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ITS 20 MILLION ELDERLY CITIZENS ARE NOT A SPECIAL CLASS OF
PEOPLE.

THE TIME HAS COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR NEEDS ARE
NOT PRIVILEGES -- BUT RIGHTS, NOT SOMETHING TO BE GIVEN BY A
GENEROUS SOCIETY, BUT SOMETHING TO BE PROVIDED ALL AMERICANS
REGARDLESS OF AGE.

L IF OUR SENIOR CITIZENS ARE FORGOTTEN TODAY IT IS BECAUSE
THIS NATION HAS FAILED TO BACK UP WORDS WITH A COMMITMENT OF
RESOURCES. L IT IS TIME WE HAD A PRESIDENT WHO IS WILLING TO
STAND UP AND SAY TO YOU:

-- IT IS WRONG THAT FIVE MILLION *7 million senior citizens* ~~OF YOU~~ LIVE IN POVERTY.

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our older Americans
-- IT IS WRONG THAT MILLIONS OF ~~YOU~~ DON'T HAVE TRANSPORTATION TO GO TO THE PLACES ^{they} ~~you~~ WANT AND NEED TO GO.

As many
-- IT IS WRONG THAT ~~you~~ LIVE IN FEAR BECAUSE THE POLICE SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THE ELDERLY.

so many of our older Americans are
-- IT IS WRONG THAT ~~you are~~ STRAPPED BY HIGH PROPERTY TAXES, SALES TAXES, AND ALL THE OTHER FINANCIAL BURDENS THAT *a pitifully small* EAT UP ~~a~~ ^{fixed} FIXED INCOME.

As many
-- IT IS WRONG THAT ~~you~~ CAN'T GET GOOD HOSPITAL AND DOCTOR CARE. AND WHEN YOU CAN, IT IS TOO EXPENSIVE.

there isn't
-- IT IS WRONG THAT ~~you aren't given~~ ADEQUATE JOB ~~with your own~~ TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ~~to continue as productive~~ ¹ MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

-- IT IS WRONG THAT YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY A HOUSE, *because*

interest + closing charges and

BECAUSE ~~THEIR~~ PRICES ARE OUTRAGEOUS, AND

-- IT IS WRONG THAT *your* ~~GOVERNMENT~~ *Government* ~~ISN'T DOING ANYTHING FOR THE MIDDLE AGE AMERICANS TOO~~

OFTEN TREATS YOU AS SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AFTER YOU HAVE GIVEN

SO MUCH TO THEM AND YOUR COUNTRY.

↳ NOT ONLY SHOULD A PRESIDENT STAND UP AND SAY THESE THINGS,
BUT HE MUST ALSO SAY: "I'M GOING TO CORRECT THESE WRONGS. I'M
GOING TO ASK THE CONGRESS AND THE NATION TO JOIN WITH ME IN
GIVING A NEW DEAL TO THE ELDERLY CITIZENS OF AMERICA."

THESE UNSPOKEN WORDS ARE THE MAIN REASON WHY TOO MANY OF
OUR ELDERLY CITIZENS SPEND THEIR REMAINING YEARS
IN SOLITUDE.

TODAY I WANT TO OUTLINE AN ACTION PROGRAM THAT WILL AT
that can bring a measure
~~LAST CHANGE THE UNDERFUNDED AND FRAGMENTED PROGRAMS WHICH ARE~~
of justice + the security to
~~SUPPOSED TO HELP OLDER AMERICANS BUT ALWAYS FALL SHORT OF THE~~
older Americans.

~~MARK~~

L I BELIEVE THAT THE NATION'S FIRST PRIORITY IS TO LIFT OUT
OF POVERTY 5.4 MILLION ELDERLY AMERICANS.

L THESE AMERICANS ACCOUNT FOR 25 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S
POOR -- BUT THEY MAKE UP ONLY 10 PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION.

AND DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS, APPROXIMATELY 100,000
CITIZENS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE LARGE NUMBERS OF ELDERLY POOR.

h IN 1970, 51 PERCENT OF OLDER WOMEN LIVING ALONE FELL BELOW THE
POVERTY LEVEL. BY THE END OF LAST YEAR, THAT NUMBER HAD JUMPED
TO 63 PERCENT.

But STATISTICS CAN'T TELL OF THE TRAGEDIES OF POVERTY -- THE
TRAGEDY OF ILL-HEALTH, POOR DIETS, SHABBY APARTMENTS, FEAR
OF BEING A CRIME VICTIM, AND JUST SIMPLE LONELINESS.

WE CAN CHANGE THIS INTOLERABLE SITUATION, *I am* ~~I WILL SOON OFFER~~

proposing
LEGISLATION TO INCREASE THE MINIMUM MONTHLY PAYMENT TO OLD AGE,

BLIND AND DISABLED RECIPIENTS TO A FEDERALLY FUNDED LEVEL OF \$165

FOR A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL AND \$215 FOR A COUPLE -- EFFECTIVE

JANUARY 1, 1972.

Now THERE IS NO FEDERAL MINIMUM, NOW EACH STATE

DETERMINES THE LEVEL IT WILL PAY.

My ^{Proposal} ~~AMENDMENT~~ WOULD GUARANTEE THAT EVERY ELIGIBLE ELDERLY

INDIVIDUAL COULD AVOID THE DEGRADATION OF POVERTY WITH A FIXED

MINIMUM INCOME.

L ^{proposal} THIS ~~AMENDMENT~~ MAKES IT A NATIONAL POLICY THAT THERE WILL

BE NO ELDERLY POOR.

L BUT THIS IS NOT ENOUGH. 1

ADEQUATE INCOMES FOR ELDERLY AMERICANS CANNOT BECOME A
REALITY UNTIL WE REFORM OUR SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM.

L TOO MANY MILLIONS OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARIES

REACH OLD AGE IN DISAPPOINTMENT AND DESPAIR.

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THE HARD-EARNED MONEY PUT ASIDE IN THE HOPE OF

OBTAINING AN ADEQUATE RETIREMENT INCOME PROVES INSTEAD TO BE A

POVERTY PAYMENT.

AND WE ALL KNOW THAT INADEQUATE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS --

MORE THAN ANY SINGLE FACTOR -- ARE THE CAUSE FOR THE CONTINUING

HARDSHIP OF MILLIONS OF ELDERLY.

A FIXED SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME CAN'T FIGHT INFLATION.

AND YOU HAVE DIMINISHING PURCHASING POWER.

IT CAN'T FIGHT RIISING PROPERTY AND SALES TAXES. ~~AND YOU~~

~~MAY HAVE TO GIVE UP YOUR HOME.~~

L IT CAN'T FIGHT EXCESSIVE MEDICAL, FOOD AND HOUSING COSTS

AND YOU MAY NOT GO TO THE DOCTOR, BUY THE FOOD YOU NEED OR

THE HOUSE YOU DESERVE.

L I PROPOSE WE TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS IMMEDIATELY:

① ONE, WE GUARANTEE A \$100 MINIMUM BENEFIT AND A 25 PERCENT
IMMEDIATE INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WITH A COST OF
LIVING ESCALATOR TO PROVIDE ELDERLY CITIZENS WITH A WEAPON TO
FIGHT INFLATION.

L TWO, WE MUST TAKE ONE-THIRD OF THE COST OF SOCIAL SECURITY
BENEFITS FROM THE FEDERAL TREASURY. (THIS WOULD CUT THE PAYROLL

TAX WORKERS NOW PAY BY TWO THIRDS) WORKING PEOPLE WOULD SAVE

AN AVERAGE OF \$175 A YEAR -

a tax saving!

3 THREE, WE MUST INCREASE FROM \$1,680 TO \$3,000 THE AMOUNT
OF MONEY OLDER AMERICANS CAN EARN BEFORE THEY BEGIN TO HAVE
REDUCED BENEFITS. TOO MANY SENIOR CITIZENS QUIT THEIR JOBS
FOR FEAR OF LOSING SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS.

4 FOUR, WE MUST NOT REDUCE BENEFITS IF OLDER AMERICANS MARRY.
~~I HAVE BEEN TOLD OF PHONY DIVORCES TAKING PLACE SO THAT ELDERLY~~
~~PEOPLE CAN AVOID ECONOMIC DISASTER~~. MARRIAGE SHOULD NOT REDUCE
YOUR BENEFITS. I PLEDGE ~~MYSELF~~ TO HALT THIS INEQUITY WHICH
FORCES MANY SENIOR CITIZENS TO LIVE AGAINST THEIR MORAL CODE.

L FINALLY, I SEE NO REASON WHY A WIDOW OR WIDOWER SHOULD
RECEIVE ANYTHING LESS THAN 100 PERCENT OF HIS OR HER SPOUSE'S
BENEFITS.

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TO PROVIDE ONLY 82 PERCENT AS IS NOW DONE IS ~~GREASOLY~~

~~UNEFAIR~~

is cheap and unfair.

L SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP TO MORE

PRODUCTIVE AND DECENT LIVES FOR ELDERLY AMERICANS. WITH THESE

FIVE BASIC PROPOSALS WE HAVE SOLVED ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM.

Medicare

THE NEXT STEP IS TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES IN MEDICARE.

YOU PAY ON THE AVERAGE \$800 A YEAR IN MEDICAL EXPENSES.

L LET'S FACE IT, THE COSTS OF GOOD MEDICAL CARE ARE STILL

A GREAT BURDEN FOR ALL OF YOU -- DESPITE MEDICARE.

L HERE IS WHAT WE MUST DO NOW TO CUT THE FINANCIAL BURDENS

OF MEDICAL CARE:

1 FIRST, I HAVE INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO HAVE MEDICARE

PAY THE FULL COST OF YOUR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, THE FULL COST

OF EYE GLASSES, HEARING AIDS, & DENTAL CARE. WHY SHOULD

MEDICARE PICK UP ONLY PART OF THE COSTS OF STAYING HEALTHY?

AND WHY SHOULD ANYONE GO TO A DOCTOR AND THEN BE UNABLE TO

AFFORD THE MEDICINE HE PRESCRIBES? THIS IS WRONG!

2 SECOND, WE SHOULD ELIMINATE THE \$50 DEDUCTIBLE FOR

SUPPLEMENTARY MEDICAL INSURANCE.

MR. NIXON AND HIS REPUBLICAN FRIENDS WANT TO INCREASE

THIS UNFAIR CHARGE. I SAY THERE IS NO REASON FOR THE POOR

AND THE ELDERLY TO PAY THE FIRST \$50 OUT OF THEIR OWN POCKETS

WHEN SOME CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION INTO TOWN.

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30 THIRD, I WANT TO ELIMINATE THE INSURANCE PREMIUM YOU

HAVE TO PAY FOR DOCTORS INSURANCE.

4 FOURTH, I INTEND TO OFFER LEGISLATION THAT WILL FREEZE

YOUR SHARE OF HOSPITAL CO-PAYMENTS -- THEY ARE HIGH ENOUGH NOW

AND THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION'S PLANNED INCREASES ARE UNFAIR.

I also propose
~~AM ALSO GOING TO INTRODUCE~~ AN EXPANDED COMPREHENSIVE

HOME HEALTH CARE PROGRAM TO BE PAID FOR BY MEDICARE.

THERE IS NO REASON YOU MUST GO TO THE HOSPITAL AND

CLINIC FOR EVERY ILLNESS CARE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE WHERE YOU

LIVE -- IN YOUR HOMES OR APARTMENTS, NOT IN A REMOTE HOSPITAL.

THESE ARE THE STEPS WE MUST TAKE NOW.

L → MEDICARE REFORM IS ONLY MAKESHIFT REFORM. WHAT IS
TRULY NEEDED IS A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL HEALTH SECURITY

PROGRAM FOR EVERY AMERICAN. THIS IS THE ONLY REAL ANSWER.

BUT WE MUST ALSO CORRECT THIS SYSTEM WHICH NOW SAYS:
WE RECOGNIZE SOME OF YOUR NEEDS BUT WE WILL NOT GIVE YOU
WHAT YOU ARE DUE BY RIGHT -- DECENT AND HEALTHY LIVES.

THE TIME HAS COME TO STOP PENALIZING AMERICANS WHEN THEY
GROW OLD AND WHEN THEY GET SICK.

WE NEED ACTION NOW ON ALL OF THESE FRONTS; INCREASED
OLD AGE ASSISTANCE, INCREASES IN RAILROAD RETIREMENT AND
SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS, AND MEDICARE REFORM.

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L BUT WE CANNOT MOVE FORWARD WITH THESE GREAT TASKS WITHOUT
STRONG EFFORTS FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS NATION TO CHANGE
~~THE ATTITUDES OF YOUNG AND MIDDLE AGED PEOPLE TOWARD THE~~
~~ELDERLY.~~

L UNTIL WE MAKE THIS NATION REALIZE THAT LIFE DOES NOT
STOP AT 60, OR 65, WE WILL NOT HAVE PROVIDED THE BASIC DIGNITY,
IDENTITY, AND SECURITY THAT ELDERLY AMERICANS NEED AND DESERVE.

L AS FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT ONCE SAID: "THE TEST OF
OUR PROGRESS IS NOT WHETHER WE ADD MORE TO THE ABUNDANCE OF
THOSE WHO HAVE MUCH; IT IS WHETHER WE PROVIDE ENOUGH FOR THOSE
WHO HAVE TOO LITTLE."

L ENOUGH PROMISES HAVE BEEN MADE. THE TIME HAS COME FOR
ACTION AND NATIONAL COMMITMENT.

#

FIVE PROPOSALS FOR ELDERLY AMERICANS

BY HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

I PROPOSE WE TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS IMMEDIATELY:

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THREE, WE MUST INCREASE FROM \$1,680 TO \$3,000 THE AMOUNT OF MONEY OLDER AMERICANS CAN EARN BEFORE THEY BEGIN TO HAVE REDUCED BENEFITS. TOO MANY SENIOR CITIZENS QUIT THEIR JOBS FOR FEAR OF LOSING SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS.

FOUR, WE MUST NOT REDUCE BENEFITS IF OLDER AMERICANS
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SECOND, WE SHOULD ELIMINATE THE \$50 DEDUCTIBLE FOR SUPPLEMENTARY MEDICAL INSURANCE. I SAY THERE IS NO REASON FOR THE POOR AND THE ELDERLY TO PAY THE FIRST \$50 OUT OF THEIR OWN POCKETS WHEN SOME CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION INTO TOWN.

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I AM ALSO GOING TO INTRODUCE AN EXPANDED COMPREHENSIVE HOME HEALTH CARE PROGRAM TO BE PAID FOR BY MEDICARE.

THERE IS NO REASON YOU MUST GO TO THE HOSPITAL AND CLINIC FOR EVERY ILLNESS. CARE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE WHERE YOU LIVE -- IN YOUR HOMES OR APARTMENTS, NOT IN A REMOTE HOSPITAL.



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