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OLDER AMERICANS

--Overview--

In a recent special message to Congress, President Ford reaffirmed his commitment to meeting the needs of older Americans, and to draw on their strengths in resolving the problems of America. He asked Congress to:

"...help our nation demonstrate by its deeds a deep concern for the dignity and worth of our older persons. By doing so, our nation will continue to benefit from the contributions that older persons can make to the strengthening of their nation."

President Ford noted that the single greatest threat to the quality of life of older Americans is inflation. His first economic priority has been to fight inflation -- and his programs have cut nearly in half the double digit inflation experienced in 1974. But, he said,

"...the retired, living on fixed incomes, have been particularly hard hit, and the progress we have made... has not benefitted them enough."

To meet this problem, the President included in his budget request for fiscal year 1977, a full cost of living increase in Social Security benefits, that will help bolster the purchasing power of 32 million older Americans. Because the President is determined that the Social Security system must remain fiscally sound, he has also requested legislation to increase payroll taxes by three-tenths of one percent for employees and employers so that payments will not exceed revenues.

In a major new program to alleviate the burden of catastrophic illness, President Ford has proposed:

- * Extending Medicare benefits by providing coverage for unlimited days of hospital and skilled nursing facility care for beneficiaries, and
- * Limiting the out-of-pocket expenses of beneficiaries for covered services, to \$500 per year for hospital and skilled nursing services, and \$250 per year for physical and other non-institutional medical services.



Millions of older persons, he said, live in fear of being stricken by an illness that will call for expensive hospital and medical care over a long period of time.

"Most often they do not have the resources to pay the bills... We have been talking about this problem for many years. We have it within our power to act now so that today's older persons will not be forced to live under this kind of a shadow."

These actions are only the most recent of many taken by the Ford Administration to help older Americans. Over the last year and a half -- from the first days of his Administration, President Ford:

- * Signed a \$22.8 billion anti-recession tax-cut bill that included payment of \$50 each to some 34 million individuals receiving Social Security, Railroad Retirement, and Supplemental Security Income benefits -- many older persons were also benefited by extension of unemployment compensation benefits, tax rebates, and 1975 tax reductions. Families caring for elderly persons were benefitted by a liberalization of the tax deduction rules.
- * Signed into law the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, providing new protections and guarantees to 35 million persons covered by private employee benefit plans, including provision for greater equity in tax treatment of private retirement savings, and insuring that participants do not lose benefits because of restrictive eligibility provisions or because the plan did not accumulate sufficient funds to meet its obligations.
- * Signed the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, which, among other things, provides for subsidized housing for low-income renters and authorizes direct, low-interest loans for housing for the elderly.



* Signed into law Title XX of the Social Security Act which provides 2.5 billion dollars to the states for social services.

Under Title XX older persons will receive increased services, planned and implemented by state and local governments -- needs and services determined not in Washington but at the local level, with the participation of the older Americans who will receive the services. And lastly, under President Ford's new Title XX proposal, states would no longer be required to give the federal government money in order to obtain federal monies in return.

President Ford has supported the concept of the Older Americans Act since its inception in 1965. This past November the President strengthened the Act when he signed into law amendments creating new services and goals. Under President Ford's Administration -- \$272 million -- almost seven times the amount available three years earlier-- went to this program. Through the Administration on Aging, created by this Act, a national network on aging composed of state, area and nutrition agencies has been established. As an example of what the Act does, nutrition agencies serve older persons over 300,000 hot meals a day, five days a week at 5,000 locations. This network helps older people to:

- * Know what resources are available
- * Secure services enabling them to live in their own homes.
- * Meet their needs for transportation
- * Provide for the weatherization of their homes.
- * Obtain legal services
- * Continue to be involved by serving in full-time, part-time and volunteer positions serving the community.
- * Cope with housing problems
- * Have a meaningful voice in setting priorities for meeting their needs at the local level.

And, in developing health care for elderly Americans, the President has directed his Administration to develop programs that will lead to better use of present and potential resources for delivery of services to the elderly with the goal of improving health and quality of life. Actions in this area include:

- * Research at the National Institute on Aging into the physical effects of aging and into the effects of the physical and social environment on the aging process.
- * Collection of information on nursing homes nationally to recommend sound policies to improve and rate quality of long-term care for the elderly.
- * Development of a national rating system for nursing homes receiving Medicaid and Medicare funds.

President Ford's commitment both to resolving the problems of older Americans -- and in using their talents -- is great. A statement from his February 9, 1976 message to Congress reflects his beliefs:

"Today's older persons have made invaluable contributions to the strengthening of our nation. They have provided the nation with a vision and strength that has resulted in unprecedented advancements in all of the areas of our life. Our national moral strength is due in no small part to the significance of their contributions."



THE ISSUES OF AGING AND OPINIONS HELD BY OLDER VOTERS

Like the electorate in general, the Senior Citizen is primarily concerned about that which directly affects his daily life.

But in addition to these "gut issues", most of which involve money, the Senior Citizen is concerned about his state of being. While the average middle-age black is likely to feel somewhat alienated, his state of being tends to be on the upswing. For him, "things are better today than they used to be". The Older American, on the other hand, has been there. The good life, the involvement he knew and the attention he received has, to some degree, faded away. Unlike the middle-age black, the Senior Citizen is likely to feel alienated because what he once had is now gone or going.

Much has been written about the psychology of aging, but it is sufficient for our purposes at this time to merely note that a "he cares about me" reaction by the voter to the candidate is more important with Senior Citizens than any other constituency.

The Issues of Aging.

1. Income security -- With less than half of his income derived from earnings and assets, the Senior Citizen is heavily dependent on matters he cannot directly control. Actions which affect social security benefits, public assistance payments, and pension income significantly influence the older voter's existence and his political behavior.
2. Health care -- With 86% of the Older Americans experiencing one or more forms of physical impairment, the availability, quality, and financing of health care is of major concern to all older voters.
3. Housing -- The less mobile Older American, with his high propensity for home ownership and fixed income, is particularly conscious of property tax increases and the sky rocketing cost of home maintenance. Those who rent are equally conscious of increased costs and of availability problems.
4. Transportation problems -- The fear of driving, cost of automobile ownership, and physical impairments require many Older Americans to rely heavily on public transportation systems which are, almost without exception, expensive, inconvenient, and often unpleasant.
5. Nutrition -- Rapidly increasing food prices, marketing difficulties, and often the lack of nutritional education all cause serious problems for the elderly.
6. Community service opportunities -- Paradoxically, those with the greatest experience to offer and the most time to give often are not able to participate in and contribute to the needs of the community. Many older people want to be involved and to give of themselves but workable opportunities are far too limited.



7. Recreation, employment and education opportunities -- The special restriction of being old greatly impairs the Senior Citizen's opportunity to work, play, and learn.

Beneath the Surface.

As is apparent from the above, the issues of aging basically trace back to personal economics for the older voter. While we use the phrase "fixed income" almost with abandon and we note the pressures of inflation, we probably fail to fully appreciate either the real money problems this causes or the desperation and despair felt by those Older Americans who are caught in the squeeze and are powerless to act on their own behalf.

Most of us also have difficulty grasping the full impact of the constant fear of illness and disease which haunts the minds of most of our older voters. Only the soldier in active combat is more exposed to and conscious of personal injury and death.

To effectively reach the emotions and the mind of the older voter we must use income security and health issues to produce the "he cares about me" response from the Senior Citizen to the President.

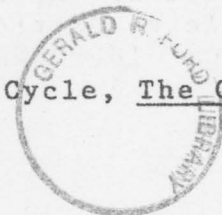
Opinions and Attitudes on Other Issues.

The Senior Citizen is also influenced by issues other than those directly involving aging. From the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, we note: (1)

"...people of retirement age are consistently less likely to express interest in foreign affairs than younger people and are somewhat more isolationist in their outlook...It would appear either that some older people, growing up in a period when foreign affairs were not as important in the nation's life as they are now, have never developed a strong interest in international problems or that retirement age leads some people to a contraction of their concerns to national and local issues, especially those that affect them directly..."

"...The sensitivity of older people to civil disorder is seen... in a series of questions...regarding public dissent, civil disobedience, and disruptive behaviour as forms of protest. Very few white people of retirement age approve of any of these actions; approval increases in the younger decades. Black people are more tolerant of protest actions of all kinds but with them also older people are the least likely to approve these acts..."

(1) Campbell, Angus, PhD, Politics Through the Life Cycle, The Gerontologist, Summer 1971, Part I, pp 112-117.



THE OLDER AMERICANS WANT PRESIDENT FORD

The Older American occupies a special place in the electorate. Unlike most sub-groups, they are not resented by others. Everyone - black or white, rich or poor - is a potential Senior American. Compared to other sub-group appeals there isn't a negative attitude caused by an Older Americans campaign. A highly visible campaign which deals with the issues of aging and directed to older voters will not produce a negative "backlash" of any consequence.

Young and middle aged voters are interested in programs designed to aid Older Americans. Many voters are experiencing firsthand contact with aging via parent or grandparent. They know that transportation to the polls is a "must" for the older voters. Those who are not ambulatory but who want to vote must be assisted in getting an absentee ballot.

REACHING THE VOTER

1. We must successfully demonstrate to the Older American voters that the President truly cares about them and is concerned about the problems associated with aging.
2. We must let the voters know that: housing and transportation for the elderly have been improved. That the Advisory Council in state and areas are composed of a majority of Older Americans over 60. Older Americans are making the decisions about Older Americans. Health care needs are a great concern. Funding for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Foster Grandparents Programs have been doubled. Inflation and taxes have been kept under control by President Ford because the problems of Older Americans are very much on his mind.
3. We must make certain that all accomplishments and efforts of President Ford are made known to Older Americans.

President Ford has demonstrated his leadership and Older Americans respect leadership. At a chaotic time, he took the reins and two years later, we have a stable economy, no war and a President we can trust to solve the problems. He has deep-seated traditional values, is an athlete, a veteran. He served in World War II and in Congress and step by step his climb has been firm and sure. The approval of Older Citizens must be stimulated and mobilized into a significant majority on November 2nd.

NATIONAL MEDIA.

There will be special TV spots on the Older Americans.

STATE AND LOCAL.

Coordinate this with your communications or Media Division. A lot of short radio announcements aimed at the area and local Older Citizens are important.

Paid advertising in newspapers and local publication, posters in conspicuous places are important within the limit of your budget. Letters to the Editor can be significant. Brochures for handing out when visiting will be available. Make certain all that you have are distributed.

The Senior Citizens Center and Organizations are important to you. The "big three" organizations are the National Retired Teachers Association with a membership close to 500,000 and the American Association of Retired Persons which, combined with the NKTA has 9 million members, with joint National headquarters and lobbying forces. They have chapters and units locally and they have some staunch supporters for the President.

The National Council of Senior Citizens reaches more than 3 million members through local clubs. They have an effective lobby. Their National Association of Retired Federal Employees is also very active.

Mailing lists and public appearances are often provided by local senior groups. Ask Chairman in each locality to serve with you and get periodic reports.

ATTENTION!

People over 80 will be sent a greeting card from the President if you give the date and write to -

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

(Attention Greeting Office)

Anniversary of 50 years and over will receive attention if the date is sent to the same office.



OLDER AMERICANS (ETHNIC)

The Administration on Aging entered into a working agreement with the Office of Native American Programs designed to improve living conditions for elderly American Indians. The study would involve a four-prong approach to:

1. Expand knowledge about the living conditions and needs of aged Indians and test alternatives for meeting these needs.
2. Heighten awareness of the cultural needs and problems faced by Older Indians, especially by governmental agencies with resources to serve this group.
3. Increase the involvement of Indian tribes and organizations in the development of policy, planning, and programing for Older Indians at all levels of government.
4. Expand government resources to serve the needs of elderly Indians and increase the number of Indian tribes and organizations receiving funds directly for purposes of providing services for the aged.

In addition, AoA awarded a model projects grant to Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores. The asociacion was legally incorporated on April 28, 1975, after considerable planning and organizing by Hispanic professionals, paraprofessionals, and senior citizens.

A major objective of the model project is to encourage greater participation by the Hispanic elderly in title III programs. The Asociacion plans to establish a national clearinghouse component to collect and disseminate information to service providers and area agencies on aging.

The National Center on the Black Aged received funds under title X (job opportunities program) of the Public Works and Economic Development Act to provide jobs for the unemployed, particularly for the older black worker. The project is designed to provide escort and security services for senior citizens.



EXTRACTS

(Federal Register - Wednesday February 25, 1976 - Part 111)Vol.41-No.38)

Page 8314 - Part 885-Loans for Housing for the Elderly or Handicapped.

An amendment to Title 24 which added a new part 885 entitled "Construction Loans for Housing for the Elderly or Handicapped.

Construction or substantial rehabilitation of projects for the elderly or handicapped.

HUD/FHA NON-ASSISTED PROGRAM SECTION 231 HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED. - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT-FACT SHEET

Section 231.

A program to aid in development of rental housing for occupancy by elderly or handicapped families or individuals.

If project is owned by a nonprofit mortgagor, eligible tenants may receive rent supplement assistance. Such assistance available only in certain projects as rent supplement program is under suspension.

President Ford - Feb. 14, 1976

Williams Park
St. Petersburg, Florida.

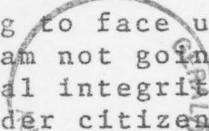
Social Security

As President, I intend to do everything in my power to help our Nation demonstrate its deep concern for the dignity and the well being of our older generations. For those who need our help we have already a number of Federal programs providing assistance in a variety of ways.

Now, let me assure you of one thing very emphatically. My Administration fully intends to preserve the integrity and the solvency of the Social Security system for your benefit and that of all working Americans, men and women, now as well as in the future.

President Gerald R. Ford - West Bend High School - April 2, 1976.

But as far as this President is concerned, he is going to face up to that issue as he has faced up to every other issue, and I am not going to kid you one bit. We are going to protect the financial integrity and security of that trust fund for the benefit of our older citizens.



EXTRACTS.

ESTIMATES OF THE RESIDENT POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES BY
AGE: 1974 AND 1970

(Numbers in thousands)

Age	1974	1970	Percent change 1970-74
Total, all ages.....	211,390	203,235	4.0
60 years and over.....	31,020	28,595	8.5
65 years and over.....	21,815	19,972	9.2
60 years and over as % of all ages.....	14.7	14.1	(X)
65 years and over as % of all ages.....	10.3	9.8	(X)

