

The original documents are located in Box 23, “2/14/76 - Remarks on Entitlement Programs for the Elderly at a Public Gathering of Senior Citizens in St. Petersburg, Florida” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-WILLIAMS PARK

THANK YOU, BILL (Cong. Young introduces you)
CONGRESSMAN LOU FREY
CONGRESSMAN SKIP BAFALIS
JUDGE ROESS (PHONETIC: RACE)
MAYOR SCHUH (PHONETIC: SHOE)
SENATOR WARE (Master of Ceremonies-State Sen.)
HONORED GUESTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE PRESIDENT HAS ~~SEEN~~ . . .

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

TO PUBLIC GATHERING (SENIOR CITIZENS)

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

-|-

IN 1952, WINSTON CHURCHILL, THEN A MERE 77 YEARS
OLD, HAD BEEN RECALLED TO THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY FOR A
SECOND TERM AS PRIME MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN.

SMILING IMPISHLY, HE TOLD THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS:

"EVERYONE HAS HIS DAY, / AND SOME DAYS LAST

LONGER THAN OTHERS."

I AM VERY HAPPY TO BE HERE TODAY WITH SO MANY
PEOPLE WHO ARE ENJOYING A LONG AND SUNNY DAY IN THE
SUNSHINE CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG / AND IN THE SUNSHINE STATE
OF FLORIDA.

THE CAREERS OF WINSTON CHURCHILL AND OTHERS WHO
ROSE TO PROMINENCE IN THEIR LATER YEARS / REMIND US ALL, /
IF WE NEED TO BE REMINDED, / THAT ADVANCING YEARS NEED NOT
MEAN A RETREAT FROM AN ACTIVE, / EVENTFUL, / ENJOYABLE LIFE.

NOR SHOULD ADVANCING YEARS BE THE CERTAIN BEARER
OF POOR HEALTH, / A MEAGER INCOME / OR SOCIAL ISOLATION•

THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS TAUGHT US THAT THE
MEASURE OF A CIVILIZATION'S ADVANCEMENT CAN BE FOUND IN
THE TREATMENT OF ITS ELDERS•

FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, THROUGH THE VEHICLE OF
SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER PROGRAMS, AMERICA HAS MADE A
FIRM COMMITMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE OLDER CITIZENS OF OUR
SOCIETY. I PLEDGE TO YOU THIS MORNING, THAT I WILL
CONTINUE TO UPHOLD THAT COMMITMENT.

IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN DRAMATIC PROGRESS
IN OUR EFFORTS TO MEET THE CONTINUING NEEDS OF AMERICA'S
OLDER GENERATION. BUT I WANT TO DO BETTER, AND WITH YOUR
HELP AND THE HELP OF THE CONGRESS, I WILL.

AS PRESIDENT, I INTEND TO DO EVERYTHING IN MY
POWER TO HELP OUR NATION DEMONSTRATE ITS DEEP CONCERN FOR
THE DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF OLDER AMERICANS•

FOR THOSE WHO NEED OUR HELP, WE ALREADY HAVE
A NUMBER OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IN
A VARIETY OF WAYS•

THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM -- THE LARGEST OF ITS
KIND IN THE WORLD -- WILL PAY ALMOST 83 BILLION DOLLARS TO MORE
THAN 32 MILLION AMERICANS IN FISCAL YEAR 1977. THAT'S MORE
THAN A 10 BILLION DOLLAR INCREASE OVER THE CURRENT YEAR.

HERE IN FLORIDA, THE SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND WILL
PAY AN ESTIMATED 4.4 BILLION DOLLARS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEXT
FISCAL YEAR. IN MY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977, I AM
RECOMMENDING THAT THE FULL COST OF LIVING INCREASES IN
SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS BE PAID DURING THE COMING YEAR.

AND 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 AMERICAN WORKING MEN AND WOMEN, /

NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

THIS YEAR, IT IS PROJECTED THAT THE SOCIAL SECURITY

TRUST FUND WILL RUN A DEFICIT OF ABOUT THREE BILLION DOLLARS.

NEXT YEAR, UNLESS MY REFORMS ARE ADOPTED, WE WILL RUN

A DEFICIT OF THREE AND A HALF BILLION DOLLARS.

IF THIS TREND CONTINUES, THERE WILL BE NO SECURITY

FOR OLD OR YOUNG.

*That's good
means
now some bad.*

AS LONG AS I'M PRESIDENT, WE'RE GOING

TO KEEP SOCIAL SECURITY PROTECTION AND EVERY OTHER FEDERAL

RETIRMENT PROGRAM, STRONG, SOUND AND CERTAIN•

YESTERDAY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ANNOUNCED

THAT WHOLESAL PRICES WERE UNCHANGED IN JANUARY.

IN FACT, WHOLESAL PRICES HAVE SHOWN NO APPRECIABLE CHANGE

SINCE OCTOBER. THIS IS MORE GOOD NEWS IN OUR FIGHT

AGAINST INFLATION -- AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON.

IN ADDITION TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM,

WE ARE CONTINUING OUR STRONG COMMITMENT TO BENEFIT PROGRAMS

FOR MORE THAN THREE MILLION RAILROAD, MILITARY AND

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RETIREES.

AFTER THE MANY YEARS OF SACRIFICE AND HARD WORK

YOU HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AMERICA, YOU HAVE EARNED MORE

THAN THE PROSPECT OF POVERTY IN YOUR RETIREMENT YEARS.

IN MY NEW BUDGET, THE SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY

INCOME PROGRAM, OR S-S-I, WILL PAY ALMOST SIX BILLION

DOLLARS IN FEDERAL BENEFITS TO MORE THAN FIVE MILLION DISABLED

AND DISADVANTAGED OLDER AMERICANS IN 1977 -- 170,000 OF THEM

RIGHT HERE IN FLORIDA.

Let's be frank

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME PROBLEMS WITH THIS PROGRAM,

AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, BECAUSE THE S-S-I REPLACED

A GREAT NUMBER OF FEDERALLY-ASSISTED STATE PROGRAMS,

AND THERE WAS SOME CONFUSION IN THE PROCESS.

WE'VE ALREADY BEGUN TO TAKE EXTENSIVE STEPS

TO CORRECT THESE PROBLEMS, AND WE WILL MAKE SURE

THAT IF ANY AMERICAN QUALIFIES FOR THESE BENEFITS,

HE OR SHE WILL GET THEM. THOSE THAT DON'T QUALIFY

WON'T BE TAKING MONEY YOU SHOULD HAVE.

IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH CARE, THE FEDERAL MEDICARE

PROGRAM IN 1976 WILL PROVIDE MORE THAN 17 BILLION DOLLARS

FOR THE HEALTH CARE OF 24 MILLION OLDER AND DISABLED AMERICANS,

ABOUT 1.4 MILLION OF THEM IN FLORIDA.

BUT THERE ARE FLAWS IN THIS PROGRAM WHICH ACTUALLY
HELP RAISE THE COST OF YOUR MEDICAL CARE AND WHICH FAIL
TO PROTECT YOU ADEQUATELY AGAINST THE ECONOMIC BURDENS
OF PROLONGED ILLNESS•

I HAVE PROPOSED MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MEDICARE
PROGRAM TO MAKE IT SERVE YOU BETTER• ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT
IMPROVEMENTS IS THE CREATION OF A SYSTEM OF HEALTH INSURANCE
THAT WOULD PAY ALL BUT A SMALL FRACTION OF THE CATASTROPHIC COST
OF COMPLEX OR EXTENDED CARE AND TREATMENT•

I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT MEDICAL TREATMENT

IS VERY, VERY EXPENSIVE TODAY. HOSPITAL COSTS HAVE RISEN

BY MORE THAN 200 PERCENT SINCE 1965, TO AN AVERAGE COST

OF 128 DOLLARS A DAY.

IF YOU HAVE TO STAY IN A HOSPITAL OR NURSING HOME

OR UNDER A DOCTOR'S CARE FOR A VERY LONG TIME, IT PUTS

AN INCREDIBLE STRAIN ON YOUR LIFETIME SAVINGS AND

ON YOUR PEACE OF MIND. AND THAT STRAIN IS FELT

BY LOVED ONES, AS WELL.

ALL OF US KNOW OF CASES IN WHICH SOMEONE IN THE FAMILY,
OR A CLOSE FRIEND, OR A MEMBER OF YOUR CHURCH HAS BEEN STRICKEN
WITH AN ILLNESS THAT LINGERS ON AND ON AND ON.

WE KNOW OF THE PAIN AND THE HEARTACHE ASSOCIATED
WITH A PROLONGED ILLNESS.

WE KNOW THAT BEING SICK AND BEDRIDDEN FOR A LONG,
LONG TIME IS BAD ENOUGH, WITHOUT HAVING A PERSON'S INCOME
AND LIFE SAVINGS DWINDLE AWAY AS THE MEDICAL BILLS KEEP
PILING IN.

THIS MUST NOT CONTINUE.

THERE IS NO REASON

THAT OLDER AMERICANS SHOULD HAVE TO GO BROKE / JUST TO GET WELL

OR STAY WELL IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

UNDER MY PROPOSAL, THE INDIVIDUAL'S CONTRIBUTION

WOULD GO UP SOMEWHAT // BUT CONSIDER WHAT THE INCREASE

WOULD PROVIDE:

NOBODY ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICARE WOULD HAVE TO PAY MORE THAN

500 DOLLARS A YEAR FOR HOSPITAL OR NURSING HOME CARE.

AND THIS DOESN'T MEAN YOU PAY THE FIRST 500 DOLLARS

OF YOUR TOTAL COST.

YOU WOULD PAY ONLY TEN PERCENT OF THE TOTAL COST, OR 500 DOLLARS

WHICHEVER IS LESS. AND THE MAXIMUM ANNUAL COST TO YOU

FOR COVERED DOCTOR'S SERVICES WOULD BE 250 DOLLARS --

OR 20 PERCENT -- AGAIN, / WHICHEVER IS LESS.

MEDICARE WOULD PAY THE REST

~~---~~ WHETHER IT COSTS

A THOUSAND DOLLARS OR 10,000 OR 50,000•

IF THE CONGRESS

PASSES MY PROGRAM, THE RUINOUS ECONOMIC BURDEN OF

CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS IS ONE THING YOU WON'T EVER HAVE TO WORRY

ABOUT AGAIN•

ANOTHER ONE OF MY PROPOSALS WOULD CONSOLIDATE

16 FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAMS, INCLUDING MEDICAID,

INTO A SINGLE TEN BILLION DOLLAR BLOCK GRANT TO THE STATES•

IF WE CAN CONSOLIDATE THESE PROGRAMS,

WE CAN MAKE THEM MORE HUMANE AND EFFECTIVE.

WE CAN IMPROVE THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE.

AND WE CAN GET THOSE SERVICES TO MORE PEOPLE WHO REALLY
NEED THEM.

PROGRAMS OF THIS KIND, DESPITE SOME ABUSES,

DO A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF GOOD.

FOR SOME OF OUR NEIGHBORS,

THEY PROVIDE THE MEANS FOR LIFE ITSELF.

THEY PROVIDE THE FOOD,

THE SERVICES, AND THE HEALTH CARE, WITHOUT WHICH SOME PEOPLE

WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ENJOY THIS BEAUTIFUL DAY OF SUNSHINE.

IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO SAY THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
IS TOO BIG THAT THIS PROGRAM AND THAT PROGRAM OUGHT
TO BE CUT OUT OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET AND TOSSED BACK
TO THE STATES TO COPE WITH IF THEIR TAXPAYERS WILL PERMIT IT.
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE, AND YOU AND I KNOW IT.

I'M AS CONCERNED AS YOU ARE ABOUT THE GROWTH
OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET. I'VE BEEN FIGHTING TO HOLD IT DOWN
FOR 27 YEARS. YOU ALL KNOW HOW I'VE BEEN TRYING
FOR THE LAST 18 MONTHS TO GET CONTROL OF THE INFLATION
WHICH HAS DONE SO MUCH ECONOMIC DAMAGE TO ALL AMERICANS.

DURING 1974, WHEN I BECAME PRESIDENT,
INFLATION WAS RAGING AT AN ANNUAL RATE OF MORE THAN
12 PERCENT -- EATING AWAY AT EVERYBODY'S BUYING POWER,
BUT ABSOLUTELY DEVOURING THE LIVELIHOOD OF PEOPLE ON
FIXED INCOMES.

I KNEW THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE TO BRING
THAT SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. I KNEW THAT DEFICIT SPENDING
BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR
TO INFLATION, AND THAT SLOWING THE GROWTH OF FEDERAL SPENDING
WAS ESSENTIAL TO SOLVING THE PROBLEM.

I'VE USED MY CONSTITUTIONAL VETO POWER 46 TIMES

SINCE BECOMING PRESIDENT, TRYING TO HOLD DOWN THE LEVEL

OF FEDERAL SPENDING, TRYING TO BREAK THE BACK OF INFLATION.

TO HOLD DOWN THE COST OF LIVING, WE MUST HOLD DOWN THE COST

OF GOVERNMENT.

WE'VE MADE SOME ENCOURAGING PROGRESS WITH THESE VETOES --

SAVING THE TAXPAYERS TEN BILLION DOLLARS. THE INFLATION RATE

THAT WAS 12 PERCENT HAS BEEN CUT NEARLY IN HALF.

THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH, BUT THAT'S PROGRESS -- REAL PROGRESS

THAT HELPS PEOPLE ON FIXED INCOMES / MORE THAN ANYBODY ELSE

IN OUR SOCIETY.

JUST YESTERDAY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ANNOUNCED
THAT WHOLESALE PRICES STAYED LEVEL IN JANUARY.
IN FACT, WHOLESALE PRICES HAVE SHOWN NO APPRECIABLE CHANGE
SINCE OCTOBER. THIS IS MORE GOOD NEWS IN OUR FIGHT
AGAINST INFLATION AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP THE PRESSURE ON.

YOU PROBABLY HEARD THAT WE HAVE HAD OTHER GOOD
ECONOMIC NEWS RECENTLY. UNEMPLOYMENT IN JANUARY TOOK
ITS SHARPEST DROP IN 16 YEARS. NINETY-SIX PERCENT
OF ALL THE JOBS LOST DURING THE RECESSION HAVE BEEN RECOVERED.
AMERICA IS GETTING BACK TO WORK,
AND WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.

BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE WE NEED TO DO.

I WANT ALL AMERICANS, YOUNG OR OLD, BLACK OR WHITE,
RICH OR POOR, TO LIVE IN DIGNITY AND SECURITY AND PEACE.

IF WE CAN CONTINUE MAKING THE PROGRESS AMERICA HAS MADE
IN THE PAST, WE WILL SEE THAT GOAL ACHIEVED.

TOO OFTEN, PEOPLE FORGET JUST HOW FAR AND HOW FAST

WE HAVE COME AS A NATION. WE HAVE OUR PROBLEMS,

AND WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO ADMIT THEM. BUT I THINK IT'S TIME

PEOPLE STOPPED RUNNING AMERICA DOWN.

I THINK IT'S TIME WE REMEMBERED HOW RICHLY BLESSED

THIS NATION REALLY IS.

YOU HAVE SEEN MUCH OF AMERICA'S PHENOMENAL PROGRESS

WITH YOUR OWN EYES.

IN THE SPACE OF YOUR LIFETIME, MAN HAS TAKEN

HIMSELF FROM THE HORSE AND BUGGY AND EXPLORED THE FAR REACHES

OF SPACE. DISEASES WHICH ONCE CRIPPLED AND KILLED MILLIONS

OF AMERICANS HAVE BEEN CONQUERED.

AMERICA'S POPULATION HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE 1910.

LIFE EXPECTANCY, WHICH IN 1910 WAS ONLY 50 YEARS,

IS TODAY MORE THAN 71 YEARS. THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT,

THE INDEX OF OUR TOTAL PRODUCTION, IS NOW SEVEN TIMES GREATER

THAN IT WAS IN 1910.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, THE STRENGTH AND GROWTH

OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY PROVIDES THE AVERAGE AMERICAN

LIVING TODAY WITH THREE AND A HALF TIMES MORE IN GOODS AND

SERVICES THAN AMERICANS ENJOYED IN 1910. NO OTHER GENERATION

OF AMERICANS HAS EVER ACHIEVED SUCH GROWTH.

IN 1910, SOME 156,000 YOUNG PEOPLE GRADUATED

FROM AMERICA'S HIGH SCHOOLS•

LAST YEAR'S COLLEGE GRADUATES

TOTALLED 944,000•

IN 1910, THERE WAS NO REGULARLY SCHEDULED

RADIO BROADCASTING IN THE UNITED STATES•

NOBODY HAD EVER HEARD OF "TELEVISION•"

TODAY WE ARE LIVING

IN AN AGE OF INSTANT AND GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS•

THESE EXAMPLES

AND THERE ARE MANY, MANY MORE

SERVE TO REMIND US OF HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED, OF HOW MUCH

PROGRESS THERE HAS BEEN: IN HEALTH, WEALTH, EDUCATION,

COMMUNICATION, LAW, AND IN EVERY OTHER ASPECT OF LIFE

IN AMERICA.

THE FACT IS THAT YOU YOUR GENERATION

HAVE BEEN THE GREATEST PIONEERS OF PROGRESS AND CHANGE

IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

BUT SOME THINGS, THANKFULLY, HAVE NOT CHANGED AT ALL•

WE ARE STILL A PEOPLE IN LOVE WITH FREEDOM, AND AFTER 200 YEARS,

THAT LOVE IS UNDIMINISHED• WE ARE STILL A NATION DEDICATED

TO PROGRESS AND PEACE IN THE WORLD• WE ARE STILL A NATION

OF COMPASSION• WE ARE STILL, AS LINCOLN CALLED US A CENTURY

AGO, "THE LAST BEST HOPE OF EARTH"•

THE UNITED STATES IS A GREAT COUNTRY,

THE GREATEST IN THE WORLD• YOU HELPED MAKE IT THAT WAY,

AND THIS NATION WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR CONTRIBUTION --

PAST, PRESENT, OR FUTURE•

NOR WILL WE EVER FORGET THE LESSON WHICH PRESIDENT

EISENHOWER TAUGHT US FROM THE WISDOM OF HIS YEARS:

"AMERICA IS NOT GOOD BECAUSE IT IS GREAT,"

THE PRESIDENT SAID. "AMERICA IS GREAT BECAUSE IT IS GOOD."

END OF TEXT