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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have given my approval today to H.R. 3922, "Older Americans Amendments of 1975".

Ten years ago, as a member of the House of Representatives, I voted for the Older Americans Act when it was enacted by the Congress. I also voted for subsequent amendments to the act. I am pleased now to give my approval to this bill which amends the act and extends it for three years. These latest amendments were the result of ten years of experiences in administering the act.

Incorporated in the Older Americans Act, as amended, are certain principles to guide the administration of the act:

- Emphasis will be placed on making services available which will enable older persons to live at home as long as possible.
- Community leaders who best know the needs of their own areas will determine the services for older persons to be started or strengthened.
- The needs of low income, older persons, including minorities, will be given priority in use of Federal funds.
- Efforts will be made to enlist volunteers from all age groups to assist in serving older persons.
- The resources now available to meet the needs of older persons will continue to be coordinated through programs administered by a number of Federal departments and agencies.
- Emphasis will be placed on opening opportunities for older persons to continue to participate constructively in the life of our nation.

I endorse the concept of the Older Americans Act which establishes a system to deliver coordinated comprehensive services at the community level and which is designed to enable older persons to live independent lives in their own residences and to participate in the life of their community.

There are, however, provisions of this act with which I disagree. The provisions concerned with age discrimination on the part of all Federal grantees have been modified to meet many, but not all, objections. The delineation of what constitutes unreasonable age discrimination is so imprecise that it gives little guidance in the development of regulations to prohibit such discrimination. Also, the provisions

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raise a question on the extent to which the Federal Government should seek to regulate private activity, particularly without holding hearings to permit affected persons and institutions to be heard.

The bill does provide, however, for study of the problems of age discrimination by the Commission on Civil Rights, and allows for these issues to be discussed thoroughly. I urge the Congress to reconsider these problems.

At a time when we are struggling to restrain growth in the Federal budget, I am not pleased to see the high authorization levels included in this bill. The authorization for social service programs for fiscal year 1976, for example, is almost twice that of my budget request. I am confident the members of the Congress share my concern about the impact of inflation on the elderly. I look forward to working with the Congress in determining appropriations levels for this act which will be adequate, equitable and not inflationary.

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