

The original documents are located in Box 23, “2/9/76 - Remarks to Congress Reaffirming Support and Protection of the Aged” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

TALKING POINTS

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE ON THE AGING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1976

TODAY I AM SENDING A MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

THAT EXPRESSES MY CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT OF

OLDER AMERICANS, MY DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE PROBLEMS

OF AGING, AND MY PROPOSALS FOR DEALING WITH SOME OF THEM.

SOCIETY OWES A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO ALL

OLDER PERSONS WHO HAVE WORKED HARD AND CONTRIBUTED

TO OUR NATION'S PROGRESS. OLDER AMERICANS CONTINUE

TO ENRICH OUR LIVES WITH THEIR VISION, STRENGTH AND

EXPERIENCE. THEY HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO LIVE

SECURELY, COMFORTABLY AND INDEPENDENTLY.

THE PROPOSALS I AM SENDING TO THE CONGRESS

██████ OFFER SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN THE QUALITY
OF LIFE OF OLDER AMERICANS.

WE ALL HAVE A STAKE IN FIGHTING INFLATION.

BUT OLDER AMERICANS LIVING ON FIXED INCOMES ARE
ESPECIALLY HARD HIT.

I PLEDGE TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION●

TO PROVIDE SPECIAL RELIEF TO THE ELDERLY, I AM REQUESTING

IN MY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977 THAT THE FULL COST OF

LIVING INCREASE IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS BE PAID

DURING THE COMING YEAR●

THE VALUE OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

IS BEYOND CHALLENGE.

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE INTEGRITY OF THE
SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND THAT ENABLES PEOPLE TO COUNT
ON THIS SOURCE OF RETIREMENT INCOME. I AM CONCERNED
BECAUSE THE SYSTEM NOW PAYS OUT MORE IN BENEFITS
THAN IT RECEIVES IN TAX PAYMENTS.

TO PREVENT A RAPID DECLINE IN THE TRUST FUND

OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, I HAD TO MAKE A DIFFICULT DECISION.

I AM PROPOSING A SMALL PAYROLL TAX INCREASE OF THREE-TENTHS

OF A PERCENT EACH FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS OF COVERED

WAGES. THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD HAVE BEEN TO LIMIT THE

EXPECTED INCREASES IN RETIREMENT AND DISABILITY BENEFITS.

THIS PROPOSED TAX INCREASE WILL HELP STABILIZE

THE TRUST FUND SO THAT CURRENT AND FUTURE RECIPIENTS

WILL BE ASSURED OF RECEIVING THE BENEFITS THEY ARE

ENTITLED TO.

I AM ALSO VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECT OF

CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS. I WANT TO LIGHTEN THE FINANCIAL

BURDEN WHICH NOW STRIKES AFTER PROLONGED HOSPITALIZATION

WHEN THE ELDERLY AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN LEAST AFFORD IT.

THEREFORE, I AM PROPOSING CATASTROPHIC HEALTH INSURANCE

FOR THE MORE THAN 24 MILLION AGED AND DISABLED AMERICANS

PROTECTED BY MEDICARE.

NO ONE WHO IS COVERED BY MEDICARE WOULD HAVE
TO PAY MORE THAN 500 DOLLARS A YEAR FOR COVERED HOSPITAL
OR NURSING HOME CARE. NO ONE WHO IS COVERED BY
MEDICARE WOULD HAVE TO PAY MORE THAN 250 DOLLARS FOR
ONE YEAR'S DOCTORS' BILLS.

BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR PHYSICIANS NOW HAVE

LITTLE INCENTIVE TO LIMIT THE DURATION OF HOSPITALIZATION

FOR LESS SERIOUS CONDITIONS.

TO ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC USE OF COVERED HEALTH

SERVICES, I AM ALSO PROPOSING CHANGES IN THE COST SHARING

REQUIREMENTS. AS UNDER THE CURRENT SYSTEM,

A BENEFICIARY WHO IS IN THE HOSPITAL WILL PAY 104

DOLLARS FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SERVICES.

IN ADDITION HE OR SHE WILL PAY 10 PERCENT OF ADDITIONAL
CHARGES UP TO AN ANNUAL MAXIMUM OF 500 DOLLARS.

FOR COVERED PHYSICIANS' SERVICES MY PROPOSAL WOULD INCREASE
THE ANNUAL DEDUCTIBLE FROM 60 DOLLARS TO 77 DOLLARS AND
WOULD CONTINUE THE CURRENT 20 PERCENT COST SHARING.

TO HELP FINANCE THE ADDED PROTECTION,

I AM PROPOSING TO LIMIT MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT RATES

TO 7 PERCENT FOR HOSPITAL SERVICES AND 4 PERCENT

FOR PHYSICIANS' SERVICES•

THESE PROPOSALS ARE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE

IN ACHIEVING MY GOAL OF HELPING ALL AMERICANS LIVE IN

DIGNITY, SECURITY AND GOOD HEALTH. I HOPE YOU WILL JOIN

IN EFFORTS TO SECURE CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF THESE

PROPOSALS.

WE MUST SHOW OUR COMMITMENT TO A CAUSE

THAT IS TOO OFTEN NEGLECTED -- THE DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING

OF AMERICA'S OLDER GENERATION.

END OF TEXT