

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am transmitting herewith the Annual Report of the Federal Council on Aging, together with my comments and recommendations.

The Federal Council on the Aging was established by the 1973 amendments to the Older Americans Act of 1965 to advise and assist the President on matters relating to the special needs of older Americans, and for other purposes specified in the enabling legislation. Members of the Federal Council on the Aging were confirmed by the Senate on June 5, 1974.

As the annual report indicates, the Federal Council on the Aging has undertaken a number of advocacy activities pursuant to its legislated mandate. The report, as submitted to me by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare for transmittal, does not include supporting data or analysis which would provide the basis for a detailed review of policy positions and recommendations.

Since the Council was only recently formed, the Administration, on behalf of the Federal Council on the Aging, has requested that the Congress authorize an extension until January 1, 1976, of the date for submission to the Congress of the two legislatively mandated studies.

One study calls for a review of the interrelationships of all benefit programs -- Federal, State, local -- serving the elderly. Such information could be useful to the Executive Branch and the Congress to identify duplicative and overlapping programs and to propose the necessary reforms so that our resources may be more effectively applied to help those most in need.

A second study, dealing with the combined impact of all taxes on the elderly, could also be helpful in determining the burdens and benefits of government actions as they affect the Nation's elderly.

I look forward to the study reports to help us provide an effective and economical delivery of services to our elderly citizens.

The Council specifically recommends "legislative action to develop high standards of safety and care in nursing homes." The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has set high standards of nursing home care and safety that must be met by nursing homes participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The enforcement of these standards is one of my Administration's highest priorities. Federal funds pay 100 percent of the costs of inspection to monitor compliance with these standards. The Federal Government pays its share of the costs of meeting nursing home standards

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through health care financing programs, primarily Medicare and Medicaid. Financial assistance is also made available by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist nursing homes in meeting selected fire safety standards.

The Council also expressed its concern about the level of funding for programs to assist the elderly. I sympathize with this concern, but I am determined to reduce the burden of inflation on our older citizens, and that effort demands that government spending be limited. Inflation is one of the cruelest and most pervasive problems facing older Americans, so many of whom live on fixed incomes. A reduction of inflation, therefore, is in the best interests of all Americans and would be of particular benefit to the aging.

The perspective and recommendations of this report are limited to a particular area of interest and advocacy.

The report does not reflect the Administration's policies, which must reflect a broader range of responsibilities and priorities.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
July 24, 1975

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