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Office of the White House Press Secretary
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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

One of the major concerns of my Administration during the next four years will be to help provide conditions under which older Americans can continue to live secure and fulfilling lives.

We all owe a debt to our older citizens. They are the ones who built our economy, and established the moral bases on which our country has grown. We must not let them down.

First of all, we must make sure that they can look forward to futures that are economically secure. But even more important than that, we must see to it that we continue to have a society and a country of which our older citizens can be proud. That, above all, is the reward that they ask.

I am proposing a specific program to help provide the foundation on which older Americans can continue to build constructive lives.

First, I will work with the next Congress to enact a catastrophic insurance plan for older Americans, so that never again will the savings of a lifetime be wiped out through a single illness. Under this plan, medical and hospital costs will never rise above \$750 in a single year.

Second, I will call on the next Congress to assure the integrity of the Social Security system. Social Security benefits are rights that have been earned by retired workers and their families. The federal government is legally and morally bound to make sure that the fund is secure. But because of the rise in the cost of living, the Social Security fund is now paying out more than it takes in. It is therefore essential to the security of retired citizens, both now and in the future, that we raise the level of the fund to the point at which it will meet projected costs.

Third, I will continue to check the rise in federal spending, in order to keep the inflation rate going down. Inflation hits hardest at our older citizens, many of whom are living on retirement incomes. If we devalue their dollars, we are robbing them of savings and pension benefits that they built up through years of labor.

Fourth, I will call on the next Congress to enact my anti-crime package, which will help protect the security of our streets and homes. Legislation that I have placed before Congress will provide tougher sentencing procedures for drug-pushers, hijackers, kidnappers, and lawbreakers who use dangerous weapons in the commission of their crimes.

Fifth, I will continue to include representative older Americans on advisory councils related to federal consumer protection programs.

Sixth, I will launch a program for neighborhood revitalization, to direct federal urban programs to protect and restore the quality of life in the urban neighborhoods in which many of our older citizens live.

Of course, in a larger sense, the entire Ford program is a program for older Americans-- because its purpose is to build a peaceful, prosperous, secure America-- the objective which older Americans share with all other citizens.

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