

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

OF

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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

H.R. 3708  
OLDER AMERICANS ACT OF 1965

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Older Americans Act of 1965

Mr. Speaker,

Today we have an opportunity to act on a bill that will restore the 18 million Americans over 65 years of age to their rightful places as citizens first-class. We shall also reclaim their wisdom, knowledge and experience so essential if we are to achieve and maintain the aims of a truly great society.

The Older Americans Act of 1965, H.R. 3708, is basic legislation. It will, for the first time, create a foundation for practical action programs that will add purpose and dignity to the later years. I regret that we have been so long delayed in bringing such a bill before the Congress for your consideration.

The need for a dynamic organization to devote full time to the complex, compelling problems of aging was well documented by the White House Conference on Aging held here in Washington, January 1961.

More than 2500 delegates participated in this forum. Behind them lay nearly 2 years of preconference study and analysis by thousands of professional and lay persons in the States and communities. The delegates represented 53 states and territories, and more than 300 national voluntary organizations interested or active in the field of aging.

In the Forward of the Report of the White House Conference, Robert W. Kean, its chairman wrote, "The report will have real and enduring value only to the extent that it is used by these groups and individuals as a guide to action in the coming years. It is these people who now must convert the Conference findings into specific actions that will help America's older citizens cope with their problems, fulfill their potentials, and make their full contribution to the life and strength of the Nation."

This report, a clear mandate for action has been to date ignored or so inadequately implemented as to be little more than a token effort.

The Older Americans Act of 1965 would salvage this 3 million dollar expenditure and convert it into the blueprint for action - many times promised - but never produced because there was not an organization in aging at the Federal level sufficiently independent, properly financed or action-oriented.

An examination of the Older Americans Act of 1965 will reveal how closely it adheres to the recommendations made in the Conference report.

"It is recommended that the Federal coordinating agency in the field of aging should be given:

- (a.) A statutory basis and more independent leadership;
- (b.) Adequate funds for coordination and other assigned functions through a "live item" appropriation;
- (c.) Responsibility for formulation of legislative proposals for submittal to Congress; and
- (d.) Responsibility for periodic reviews of and reports on the various Federal programs, departments and agencies working in behalf of older people to achieve their effective coordination and operation.

In determining the ratio of State funds that must match Federal funds used to finance Federal-State programs in behalf of older people, the Federal government has a responsibility to take into consideration the varying degrees of fiscal capacity or ability of the several States of the Union as related to the program.

Without attempting to detail the 6 Titles of the Older Americans Act, it will be helpful to understand how each meets a need that not only complies with the directives of the Conference report - but which have since been endorsed by every major organization of older persons, religious groups, labor and industry leaders and by State and local commissions and committees on aging.

Title I - contains a 10-point declaration of objectives "in keeping with the traditional American concept of the

inherent dignity of the individual under democratic society."

The governments at the Federal, state and political subdivision levels have a duty and responsibility to assist older people to secure equal opportunity to the full and free enjoyment of the objectives outlined in the bill.

Title II corrects one of the greatest injustices and misrepresentations perpetrated against the older American.

For reasons unknown nor made clear to me in hearings on the subject, the Office of Aging was relocated from the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and demoted to a subordinate place in the Welfare Administration, thereby attaching a label of "Welfare" to the nation's older persons and the programs planned for them.

Admittedly there is and will always be a need for old age assistance programs but the Nation's aging have rightly resented the connotation or inference that they were socially underprivileged, or public assistance recipients.

Under Title II the Administration on Aging will be established within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. It will be under the direction of a Commissioner on Aging to be appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

This new Administration on Aging will give prestige, balance, strength, continuity and visibility to Federal activities in aging. It is intended to stimulate more effective use of existing resources and available services both within and without the Federal government.

An Administration on Aging will at long last establish a focus and organization that will not be dominated or over-shadowed by programs assigned higher priorities or lower interest. The renaming, revitalizing, and reviving of units, committees and councils on aging have been the history of such programs to date.

Surely any activity of government that touches the lives of 10 percent of its citizens is deserving of greater recognition and stability.

Grants for Community Planning Services and Training are provided in Title III.

A five year grant program will be carried out with 5 million to be appropriated for the year ending June 30, 1966, 8 million on 1967 and sums for the next three years to be appropriated by the Congress.

It should be noted that the sums appropriated under this title will bear the same ratio as the population aged sixty-five or over in the state bears to the total population aged 65 years or over in all of the states.



There is a matching provision in this title that reduces the states' allotment from 75 percent of the cost of a project for the first year, to 60 percent for the second year of such a project and to 50 percent for the third year.

From states' allotment for a fiscal year not more than 10 percent or \$15,000, whichever is larger, shall be available for paying one-half of the costs of the state agency designed to administer the plan.

The Project Grants for Research and Development Project under Title IV and Training Projects under Title V require the recipient to contribute money, facilities or services for carrying out the grants. Because of the nature of the projects and their broad national implications a matching grant formulae was not used.

An advisory Committee on Older Americans consisting of the Commissioner and fifteen persons not otherwise in the employ of the United States will be established under Title VI. Members shall be selected from among persons who are experienced in or have demonstrated particular interest in special problems of the aging. They shall hold office for a term of three years.

It must be obvious that this is a bill without frills, directed toward practical action, non-welfared centered administration with modest but limited appropriations and grants and provisions for citizen participation.

This bill is urgently needed to compensate for the omission of a meaningful place for older persons in the provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act, and will serve as a companion piece of legislation to a health care bill which does not in anyway duplicate or overlap the purposes and objectives of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

The hearings held by the Select Subcommittee in Education, chaired by Representative Dent in September 1963 resulted in overwhelming bi-partisan approval by both the Subcommittee and the Committee on Education and Labor.

I cannot imagine any bill that could do more to encourage, stimulate and assist states, territories and local communities as well as organizations both public and private in the field of aging to assume their fair share of responsibility in initiating and promoting programs that will create opportunities for meaningful living in the later years.

To the 1000 persons who join the ranks of those persons 65 years of age or over each day we will add a new spark of hope and aspirations for a responsible role in the Great Society.

It has been said that if that spark goes out of the breast of its citizens nothing can save a nation. When a civilization is on its way to greatness, the individuals are growing.

Your favorable vote on H.R. 3708, the Older Americans



Act of 1965 might well achieve the goal that the late President Kennedy had in mind when he said, "We shall be judged in the eyes of the world not only by what we do in outer space, but also by what we do here on earth for our older population."