

Conference of State Executives for Aging

Statement of
Congressman John E. Fogarty

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to have an opportunity to meet with you today and to take part in this Conference that has been called to stimulate action and cooperation with officials of state organizations in the field of aging.

Before accepting this invitation to speak, I inquired whether I would be welcome in view of some of my recent statements regarding the Department's program in aging and my strong views favoring an independent U. S. Commission on Aging. I was assured this meeting would attempt to air controversial issues and clarify ways to achieve action.

I commend the courage of the staff and fully endorse the purpose of the meeting.

It has been encouraging to me to find out how many people read the Hearings on Appropriations. As you can surmise there has been an impressive response running the full gamut of, "you were too severe" or "congratulations on your forthright statement of the facts."

Anyone who is familiar with my Congressional record should understand my obsession for practical action and my irritation with vague generalities and empty words. Having done everything within reason to encourage and support a positive program in aging, my patience has worn a little thin.

I did not introduce the bill for a White House Conference on Aging as a political gesture as some of its critics now chose to remark, but rather as a sincere desire to convene the most knowledgeable people in the field to give serious thought and consideration to the vast uncoordinated research and information and to submit a workplan for action within a reasonable time following the meeting.

As you may recall, the three basic ideas I continued to voice in supporting the legislation were: (1) that the Conference be planned and directed on a bipartisan or nonpartisan basis, that (2) older persons be given the opportunity to speak for themselves, and (3) that government at all levels and organizations, public and private should come to know the area of responsibility for which each is best qualified and proceed on a coordinated basis.

In the many meetings preceding the White House Conference, I severely criticized those groups and individuals who attempted to divert or pervert the plans and goals of the Conference.

My concern for the aged has never been based on an opportunistic approach to a special interest group. It has been firmly developed over the years on deep awareness of their problems and a firm belief in the need to restore the nation's elderly to their rightful place as first class citizens with full recognition of their rights, feelings and obligations.

Serving as I do as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Appropriations, I know that the solutions to the problems of the aging at the Federal level are the concern and responsibility of many departments and agencies and not contained within the jurisdiction of any one. In recognition of this fact, I announced my intention to sponsor a bill creating a Federal Commission on Aging at the opening session of the White House Conference on Aging and went directly to the floor of the House and introduced such a bill. I believed then and time has supported my view, that such a commission would be

needed to give meaning, and support to the recommendations that would come from the White House Conference, if the meeting were to become something more than just another meeting on aging.

As some of you may know, the scheduled hearings on my bill were postponed last year at my request, to allow the new Administration and its chosen leaders in aging to proceed with their plans without undue pressure or conflict of interest.

To further assist the efforts of the Staff on Aging, I encouraged and supported a request for supplemental funds for expanding staff and developing materials so necessary to achieve even a minimum action program at the Federal level.

There are reasons why the purposes of the supplemental appropriations were not achieved and I do not want to imply that it was due to a breakdown in staff responsibility. I believe they are well qualified and able public servants, and are dedicated in their work. Rather, I am further convinced that the organizational structure is at fault and serves to defeat their aims.

As you know, Senator McNamara had introduced a bill calling for an Office of Aging within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare which he strongly endorsed at the White House Conference. Since then his Special Committee on Aging has conducted 34 or more hearings throughout the country. Based on firsthand knowledge and information furnished by professionals as well as older persons themselves, the Senator also recognized the need for a more dynamic role for the Federal government in setting an example and giving leadership to the States and government at all levels.

With these thoughts in mind, Senator McNamara and I introduced identical bills, S. 2779 and H.R. 10014 on January 31, 1962, calling for the establishment of an independent U. S. Commission on Aging with authority and funds to meet the goals of a nation interested, grateful and faithful to its senior citizens.

We recognized that a commission might not coincide with the Administration's aim to reduce the number of such independent bodies, but we felt so deeply the urgency for positive action that the Senator and I sent a joint letter to the President outlining the need for

vigorous action at the Federal level to give visibility to the Government's sincere desire to move courageously into the broad field of aging with a balanced program that gives equal recognition to all of the vital programs throughout the entire Government without restricting it to any one department or agency where it becomes a miscellaneous function that does not rate the distinction of a separate line item in the total budget.

I shall not attempt to go into the details of the bill for a U. S. Commission. It may be helpful if I call to your attention as State officials to several of the features that have direct bearing on your programs and the function for which you have responsibility.

Title IV of the Bill on Planning Grants would appropriate \$2,090,000 for grants to States "for establishing and initiating the operation of a state agency to, or improving the operation of an existing state agency to, and for assisting such agency to:

- (1) plan new or improved programs to carry out the purposes of the act;
- (2) assist communities in planning and developing such programs;

- (3) improve the coordination of programs and other activities to carry out the purposes; and
- (4) conduct studies to assist in planning and improvement of such programs.

Title V covering Project Grants would authorize to be appropriated for each of the next four fiscal years the sum of \$10,000,000 for grants to States for projects for:

- (1) community planning and coordination of programs for carrying out the purposes of this Act;
- (2) demonstrations of programs or activities which are particularly valuable in carrying out such purposes;
- (3) training of special personnel (including volunteers) needed to carry out such programs and activities; and
- (4) establishment of new or expansion of existing programs to carry out such purposes, including establishment of new or expansion of existing centers providing recreational and other leisure-time activities and informational, counseling, and referral services for older persons and assisting such persons in providing volunteer community or civic services.

Time does not permit going into the many other ramifications of the bill that were purposely designed to answer the needs of States and their programs. It does take full advantage of the talent and experience that the States have identified and gives assistance and support in such a way that it will stimulate and encourage further effort without the threat of domination or control. I have brought copies of the bill for you to study, consider - and yes - support.

I am sure that when you read the bill in its full context you will realize that the purpose of a commission transcends personalities and is not a reflection on the efforts of those who are doing their best under unrealistic, organizational barriers.

The U. S. Commission in no way detracts from the importance or significance of the Department's programs concerned with aging. Anyone knowledgeable in the field of aging must be aware of the tremendous task of coordinating and relating the far flung programs of H.E.W.

The broad implications for aging in the Public Health Service and the Institutes of Health, the Social Security program, Food and Drug Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the many aspects of the Office of Education and the Special Staff on Aging require the full time attention of all staff available.

You must also recognize the need for the Department of Labor with its vital role in employment and training to be fully recognized in a Federal program in aging, together with all of the needs of the elderly represented in the responsibility of the Housing and Home Finance Agency. The far reaching activities of the Department of Agriculture, Veterans Administration and other agencies of the Federal government deserve to be represented as equal partners in meetings to determine national policies and goals for our senior adults.

I would like to call your attention to the President's message of March 29 which recommended a reorganization in the field of science and technology. This calls for the establishment of an Office of Science and Technology in the Executive Office.

Of special interest is the supporting language contained in a study submitted to the Committee on Government Operations in the

Senate by its Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery.

"The range of agency technical activities is immense.....

No one person in the government, nor any one committee of directors, can have detailed knowledge across the whole spectrum of science. The departmental experts in each field, together with their agency heads, must bear the main planning burden on programs related to their departmental missions.

"At the same time, a President can be greatly helped by having his own above-the-department science advisers.

They can give him counsel "in the round" - from a government-wide, rather than departmental, perspective. They can assist him in cross-agency coordination. They can alert him to promising developments lying outside of obvious agency missions and having no departmental home. They can call to his attention programs of high national priority, but low agency priority. They can help him in checking on agency performance."

This is precisely the point Senator McNamara and I made in our first letter to the President and again in a joint letter we sent to him yesterday endorsing the same reasons for establishing an independent commission on aging.

This concept of a commission is one that States have been encouraged to establish to meet their needs and overcome difficulties in interdepartmental relationships that exist much as they do at the Federal level.

There is more I could say, but I feel certain you must be aware of my conviction that the establishment of the U. S. Commission is the most promising hope we have of meeting the challenge that we have shadowboxed too long. It will bring into reality those overdue promises we have continued to make to our citizens over the years.

I pledge you my support in moving forward in an area where we share common interests and goals and must coordinate all of our efforts if we are to achieve and maintain the leadership that is America.