

Speakers

11/27/67

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Mr. Speaker,

In the national climate that seeks to create a "Great Society" through the enrichment of the life of man, we shall be guilty of dereliction of duty unless we give more than lip service to the needs of the 18 million Older Americans in our present society.

The brochure writers, the social workers and even legislators talk and write of the "Golden Years" and of "Senior Citizens" but these are euphemisms. The enormous strides in medicine and technology have added years to life, but for too many, we have merely given them meaningless years in which to exist.

We are on the threshold of enacting a program of health care for the aged and most of us will agree that action is long overdue. However, I am deeply concerned that some may be misguided into believing that health-care is the total answer to the needs of the elderly.

If we are to make it possible for older persons to realize their full potential in the later years, we must establish a framework or an organizational structure that will stimulate, assist and support positive, practical,

action programs. These should remove arbitrary age barriers, create opportunities based on experience and ability, and recognize the right of older persons to dignity and independence throughout the added years.

This is a plea I have made specifically to each session of Congress since 1958 but the urgency for prompt action in this session has reached the critical stage.

It is inexcusable that fifteen years after the first committee on aging was established in the Federal Security Agency in 1950, that we have made so little progress in implementing the knowledge that we have derived from the hundreds - or even thousands of meetings and conferences that have been held on the subject of aging - including the White House Conference on Aging held four years ago.

Perhaps, I am more deeply aware of this tragedy of inactivity because of my close association with the legislation that has been proposed to restore older Americans to their rightful places as first class citizens.

An objective appraisal of the program on aging pursued in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and by the ever - reorganized - still - the same ineffective interdepartmental council on aging is convincing evidence of

the need for an independent organization in the field of aging; one that can deal forthrightly with the many phases of the subject without being submerged, dominated or diluted with other programs primarily directed toward welfare.

One need only glance through the latest insult to aging "On Growing Older" published by the Council to understand why I urge prompt consideration of the "Older Americans Act" which I am introducing today.

This bill is identical with the Older Americans Act which I introduced last year and which was enthusiastically supported by national authorities, state officials and organizations of older persons on a bi-partisan basis.

On June 11 of last year, the Committee on Education and Labor submitted the following report on H.R. 10088.

"The Committee on Education and Labor, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 10088) to provide assistance in the development of new or improved programs to help older persons through grants to the States for community planning and services and for training, through research, development, or training project grants, and to establish within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare an operating agency to be designated as the "Administration on Aging," having considered the same, report favorably thereon with amendments and recommend that the bill as amended do pass."

The bill meets the major organizational recommendations of the White House Conference on Aging and overcomes the present welfare stigma on aging by establishing the "Administration on Aging" in HEW but removed from the welfare setting and supervision.

The Secretary of HEW is authorized to carry out during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1966, and each of the four succeeding fiscal years, the following program of

\$5,000,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1966

\$8,000,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1967

\$8,000,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1968

- for each of the two succeeding fiscal years, such sums as the Congress may authorize by law.

The Secretary shall carry out Titles IV and V (The Research Development Projects and training projects) and is authorized

\$1,500,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1966

\$3,000,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1967

\$3,000,000 for fiscal year ending June 30, 1968

- each of two succeeding fiscal years, such sums as may be appropriate as the Congress may hereafter authorize by law.

These grants and appropriations have been so authorized to give Congress the opportunity to review the results after three years to measure the accomplishments and continuation of the program.

The grants to the states would salvage the programs that were begun in preparation for and since the White House Conference on Aging that need a minimum of financial assistance to move forward.

For the first time, there will have been created at the Federal level a practical operating program that works with the states, communities and older individuals toward an action program that will help to achieve the maximum potential of the Older American as a national asset.

I earnestly hope the Older Americans Act will be recognized for immediate consideration and that you will give it your full cooperation and support.