

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES FOR 1971
STATEMENT BY SENATOR CHURCH, CHAIRMAN

The Senate Special Committee on Aging has a unique mission during the remaining ten months before the White House Conference on Aging. As the single Congressional unit charged with the responsibility of keeping watch over all developments related to legislation and problems affecting older Americans, it is obliged to raise its voice, as powerfully as it can, on issues which should receive attention by the conferees and by participants in all preliminary activities, such as State conferences now scheduled for May.

Therefore, I have asked the staff to begin or continue work on the following:

ONE: This Committee should conduct a legislative review of the Administration on Aging at the earliest possible date. Recent developments make this action essential. The AoA recently relinquished control of its research and demonstration program and its training program. In addition -- as attested to in a recent article in the Washington Star -- leaders in the field are becoming increasingly critical over AoA management of preparations for the White House Conference.

Finally, the budget requests for AoA would result in a serious setback for that agency. The National Association of State Units on Aging has advised me that the proposed cutbacks would be disastrous. We expect soon to have a report on the probable effects in each State, and I will forward information to each member of this Committee on the problems that may be

expected to arise in his State.

As in 1970, a bipartisan effort to bolster AoA may be not only desirable but essential.

We may also find it necessary to look into budgetary constrictions in programs for the elderly in the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Labor.

All such inquiries would be made, of course, in consultation with Senator Eagleton, who -- in addition to his service on this Committee -- is the new Chairman of the Special Subcommittee on Aging in the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

TWO: Special problems of elderly members of minority groups should also receive Committee attention this year. The Committee already has taken much testimony on Mexican-Americans. Preliminary papers on elderly Negroes and American Indians have been prepared within recent weeks, and they clearly show the need for additional attention -- possibly at hearings or in reports by Task Forces -- during the next year.

THREE: A study of older Americans in rural areas has been advanced in hearings conducted by Senator Hartke, Senator Miller, Senator Randolph and myself. We should conclude this study by mid-year, and we should attempt to complete our record with field hearings in New England, the mid-west, another southern State, and in the Southwest.

Final hearings should be conducted in Washington, D.C. and a report should be issued well ahead of the White House Conferences.

FOUR: My predecessor as Chairman began hearings during 1970 on "Sources of Community Support for Federal Programs Serving Older Americans." He has opened up an important field of inquiry which should be continued in 1971. The goal here is to explore the contributions that can be made by churches, labor unions, and other non-profit sponsors to the well-being of older Americans through cooperative action by the government and private resources. Here again, a publication should be issued in time to be of help to the White House conferees.

FIVE: Legal Problems of the Elderly received attention last year at a hearing held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Bar Association. A working paper, prepared in advance of that hearing, suggested many additional subjects for close examination by this Committee.

SIX: Senator Moss has conducted very helpful hearings for the full Committee on the Usefulness of the Model Cities Program to the elderly. This study was to have been completed in 1970, but it should receive additional attention because of recent developments, including uncertainty about the future of that program.

SEVEN: Since this is a White House Conference year, we on this Committee should give some thought, it seems to me, to the feasibility and desirability of conducting hearings in the States we represent in conjunction with the State conferences scheduled for May. This would be possible, of course,

only if the planners of the State conferences believe that we could serve a constructive purpose. If they are agreeable, such hearings could serve two purposes:

1. The conferees could present a report on the major issues as they see them and give us suggestions on actions this Committee could take before and after the White House Conference.
2. They could tell us whether they are satisfied with the preparations for that conference.

We should also give some thought to the possibility of hearings by this Committee approximately a month or so before the White House Conference. The purpose would be to hear from informed witnesses on the many issues which this Committee has raised recently, and which we will continue to raise during the next few months.

We should -- it seems to me -- make some kind of effort to hear from those who may agree or disagree with our declarations. The hearings would also serve as a guide to Congressional concern about issues which should receive attention at the Conference.

EIGHT: Staff work is also under way on a study of alternatives to institutionalization of the elderly in State hospitals, the use of Social Security trust funds, disabled older Americans, and the District of Columbia as a microcosm of central city problems encountered by the elderly. If agreeable to Senator Eagleton, the last study could be

conducted in conjunction with the District of Columbia
Committee.

In summary, the Committee has a great deal of work to
do, but this is an exceptional year. White House Conferences
on aging occur only once in a decade, and their influence
should be felt throughout the following decade.

We will hear now from Subcommittee Chairmen.

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