

Senior Citizens News

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SURVIVAL OF AGING COMMITTEE IS OVERWHELMING VICTORY FOR NCSC

The National Council of Senior Citizens had one of its finest hours February 1—when, largely through its all-out drive, an attempt to abolish the Senate Special Committee on Aging was thwarted on the Senate floor by a vote of 90 to 4.

“Senior Power”—the National Council’s action slogan—paid off as United States Senators overwhelmingly voted to maintain the Special Committee on Aging as a separate permanent committee rather than bury it in a newly-created Human Resources Committee.

The magnificent victory—accomplished through adoption of an amendment by Senator Frank Church (D.-Ida.) to the Senate Reorganization Bill (S. Res. 4)—came as the result of a marshalling of Senators in support of the Church Amendment by the National Council.

The National Council swung into action when the Senate Rules Committee voted by the narrow margin of a single vote to abolish the Special Committee on Aging.

The entire National Council headquarters staff was mustered in to telephone or otherwise contact NCSC State, Area Councils or Club leaders to reach their Senators and urge them to save the Special Committee.

Executive Director William R. Hutton immediately dispatched a Seniorgram to NCSC Executive Board members and leaders of all clubs and councils affiliated with NCSC calling upon them to contact their Senators and urge them to vote for the Church Amendment.

“THIS ACTION if allowed to stand,” Hutton said of the Rules Committee action, “would be against the best interests of all older Americans.”

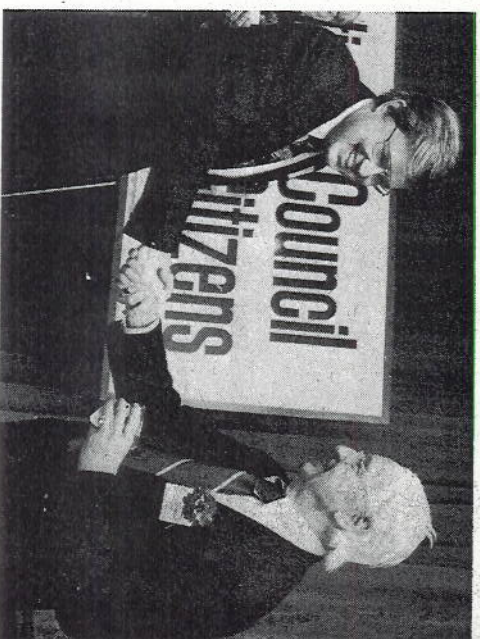
“The over 25 million elderly need this Special Committee on Aging as their advocate in the U.S. Senate.

“DO QUESTION the denial to 25 million senior citizens the same consideration which we are extending to veterans, native Americans, and small business,” Church told the Senate as the debate began February 1.

Another key point was the support for Church’s amendment by Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr. (D.-N.J.), the chairman of the Human Resources Committee to which S. Res. 4 proposed transferring jurisdiction over aging.

Williams’ panel already had legislative jurisdiction over most aging programs. The Special Aging Committee has no legislative powers. But the New Jersey Democrat had argued in the Rules Committee that the

NCSC EXECUTIVE BOARD
Executive Board of National Council reaffirms support of National Health Security legislation this year. Stories, photos on Pages 4, 5, 6, and 7.



EBULLIENT Senator Frank Church (D.-Ida.) greets President Nelson H. Cruikshank (right), as he arrives at the celebration marking the victory of NCSC’s drive to save the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

THE VICTORY WAS HALLED by NCSC President Nelson H. Cruikshank in a statement issued to the news media:

“The Senate has made the right decision. It would have been unthinkable to approve other non-legislative

needs of the elderly may receive full consideration."

The interval between the Rules Committee vote, January 17, and the floor debate, February 1, provided time for NCSC to mount its intensive effort on behalf of the Special Committee and the Church Amendment.

IT WAS POINTED OUT by NCSC that the Rules Committee had voted to preserve the Veterans and Small Business Committees, and to establish a new committee on Indian Affairs.

Senator Church introduced his amendment with 51 cosponsors, which assured the measure passage, due to the efforts of NCSC and the older Americans who rallied to the cause.

When Church came up with this overwhelming show of support for the Special Committee, those who would have abolished it saw the handwriting on the wall.

of Human Resources.

Church pointed out that while Human Resources had legislative jurisdiction over many aging programs, the Finance Committee had jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid, and other committees were involved in other aspects of concern to older Americans. The special committee, Church said, offered the only forum in which the broad range of issues important to elderly Americans could be considered.

Sen. Adlai Stevenson (D.-Ill.) repeated arguments he had made during the Rules Committee debate—that a vote to preserve the Aging Committee would only add to the proliferation of committee assignments that made it difficult for senators to function effectively.

BUT THE ILLINOIS DEMOCRAT clearly recognized that Church held all the cards. Stevenson gave in, winning a few concessions from Church and then joining with 89 other senators in voting 90-4 to keep the committee alive.

All of the five Rules Committee members who had voted to abolish the Aging Committee during the markup on S. Res. 4 changed their positions when the issue came to the floor. Only four senators, including two freshmen, opposed the tidal wave.

While the National Council had been in accord with the need to simplify the complex and unwieldy Senate committee structure, the recommendations reported out by the Rules Committee had made a travesty of this principle.

NCSC could see no justice in retaining the Veterans and Small Business Committees, both non-legislative bodies like the Special Committee on Aging, while scuttling the one committee concerned with the rights of more than 25 million Americans.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL then asked Senator Church to sponsor the Amendment to continue the Special Committee on Aging, though reducing its membership to nine from the 23 on the committee.

In response to Hutton's Seniorgram, club and council leaders sent thousands of telegrams and letters to their Senators urging them to save the Special Committee.

As a result of the Senate's action, the Special Committee is constituted as a permanent committee of non-legislative status. Previously, it was renewed annually by the Senate.

on a broad examination of the problems of our people."

Observing the extent of the significant victory, Hutton added:

"It is important to highlight the use of *Senior Citizens News*, the National Council's monthly newspaper, as a tool of legislative action.

"Over a quarter of a million dues-paying members of NCSC get *Senior Citizens News* mailed to their homes. It carries complete details of key legislation affecting the elderly and often includes box scores of some of the most important votes.

"IN THE FIGHT to save the Senate Special Committee on Aging, we told all Senators we talked with about cosponsorship of Senator Church's amendment to save the committee, that we would publish their names in a special box in the *Senior Citizens News* published February 1, if they were going to cosponsor the amendment. The paper had to go to press before the vote on the Senate floor. Senator Church's staff told me would-be sponsors their names would be included in *Senior Citizens News* if their requests were received before 5 p.m., Monday, January 31.

"*Senior Citizens News* went to press with the names of 51 cosponsors, plus the indication of about a dozen Senators who said they would not cosponsor but would vote for the Church amendment.

"This was a successful repeat of a similar tactic we employed in 1975 to win a social security boost of 20 per cent added to the debt ceiling limit bill by a floor amendment, also introduced by Senator Church.

AS THE SIGNIFICANCE of the victory was felt by the Senate and elsewhere, Hutton fired off another Seniorgram, reading:

"Congratulations!

"Your magnificent response to our appeal for help to persuade the U.S. Senate to continue the "Senate Special Committee on Aging" paid off last night in a stunning 90-4 vote in our favor on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

"When Senator Frank Church introduced his amendment with 51 cosponsors, those who opposed retaining the Senate Special Committee realized they would be defeated. An agreement was made to reduce the committee in size from 16 to 9 members at the end

(Continued on Page 2)

IF YOU ARE NOT YET A MEMBER . . . JOIN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS NOW AND HELP SENIOR PEOPLE GROW!

SEE PAGE 8 FOR DETAILS AND MEMBERSHIP COUPON!