

*For Frank Edwards  
Program*

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6/1/53

It's high time more attention was given the increasingly difficult financial plight of our older people -- our senior citizens.

They have been caught in a financial squeeze by the rising costs of living, because they are on a fixed income of one kind or another and haven't shared in the benefits of higher salaries and higher profits others have realized in recent years.

Social security benefits are vitally important to the welfare of an increasing number of our senior citizens. The number of aged persons drawing insurance benefits today is four million. This is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million more aged persons on insurance than on old age assistance.

Yet in the face of the highest cost of living in our Nation's history, benefits under social security insurance average only about \$50 per month. Old age assistance payments average about the same, perhaps a little less.

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Can anyone say that \$50 is enough to live on today?

Congress has a responsibility to re-examine this problem, and act intelligently and expeditiously to improve our social security program.

I have introduced several bills intended as a step in that direction. They don't do all that I would like to do, but at least they are a start. I'm asking that our aged people be permitted to earn up to \$100 per month, instead of \$75, in private work without incurring loss of insurance benefits. I've asked that family social security insurance benefits be increased by boosting the benefit of a wife from 50 to 75% of the husband's benefit, and increasing the widow's benefit from 75 to 100%. I've, also, asked that we extend for another two years the increased Federal participation for old-age assistance, aid to the blind, aid to the permanently and totally disabled, and aid to dependent children, without which such aid would be decreased in 1954, instead of being increased.

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I'm, also, happy to be co-sponsoring another bill providing up to sixty days of prepaid hospitalization per year for everyone eligible for social security benefits -- you know, I've always felt one of the glaring loopholes in our social security system has been failure to provide for the <sup>un</sup>predictable hazards of illness and injury. This would plug that gap.

I believe the social security program must eventually be extended to cover everyone, and that its benefits should be made more adequate. I'm working on another bill that will offer some further improvements in a new direction, and perhaps ease the cost of living squeeze on our elderly citizens. I shall continue to support such proposals designed to improve social security benefits for all the American people.



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