9-15-1978

Governor's Conference on Aging

Max S. Baucus

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches

Recommended Citation
Baucus, Max S., "Governor's Conference on Aging" (September 15, 1978). Max S. Baucus Speeches. 74.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches/74

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and Special Collections at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Max S. Baucus Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Senator * or Department*: BAUCUS

Instructions:
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series. Prepare and insert additional forms at points that you want to index. For example: at the beginning of a new folder, briefing book, topic, project, or date sequence.

Record Type*: Speeches & Remarks

[ ] September-1978

___________ Social Conditions

(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

___________ Speech for the Governor's Conference on Aging

_________ 09/15/1978
Notes to begin the aging speech by phone.

First, Walter Marshall will get the connection from phone to P.A. system set up.

You will be addressing between 400 and 500 Montana Senior Citizens. They are at the Big Sky Convention Center.

Walter says to start by saying something along the lines of: Jim Bittner

"Thank you very much Walter, Mr. Galley, Chairman Smith and Montana Senior Citizens.... But once you are on the phone with Walter, before the patch up is complete, you should double check this.

The phone number is 995-4211. Extension 22293.
It's good to talk with you today, I only wish I could see you, too. I hope somebody on your end will break in and let me know if anybody is hissing or booing or falling asleep.

You know, Cardinal Spellman once said that there are three ages of man: Youth, middle age, and "my, you're looking wonderful!"

Well, I'd better not say you're looking wonderful. I can't even say you sound wonderful. All I can say is that I'd sure rather be looking up at Lone Mountain or fishing in the Gallatin with some of you than sitting here at my desk in the Capitol.

I don't know if you know it, but you are part of the fastest growing group in America. There were 22 million Americans over age 65 just 4 years ago. By 40 years from now, this number will have doubled.

I must say that the country and its Congress are having trouble understanding what this means for us.

Inflation hits the elderly like no other group. Medical costs, transportation, rising property taxes, food: I don't think I need to tell anyone of you how incredibly helpless people on fixed incomes are to
It costs a heck of a lot when the public supports a person in an institution -- often a lot more than if we'd designed our system to keep people out of institutions if at all possible.

I am on the Appropriations Subcommittee which funds the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and there are a couple of good changes going on which I want you to know about.

First, many of you may have heard of the HUD program for elderly and handicapped housing. Just last week I was really pleased when loans came through to build 30 units of this housing for the elderly and handicapped in Whitefish, 24 more in Shelby, and another 9 units in Butte.

If there are any Golden Agers from Whitefish listening, I want you to know that I've talked with people in the Office of the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and asked them to do everything possible in getting your housing project funded.

What the rest of you may not know is that while rural communities have only about a third of the nation's population, they have over two-thirds of the nation's substandard housing.

I've been pushing HUD to do something about this, and they tell me that part of the problem in building houses for the elderly and handicapped is that there
adjust to the severely inflated costs of these basic necessities.

It's not that you can forego buying a weekly prescription the way someone can pass over buying a second television.

And, when you are forced into selling a house you worked all of your life to pay for -- just to pay high property taxes, something is just plain wrong. And we have to put a stop to it.

Let's talk about housing for a moment.

I wonder how many of you are living in houses of your own. I would guess many of you are having problems paying your taxes -- or know someone who is. And how about those of you who rent? I wonder if there is anyone of you who are listening whose rent has gone down in the last year. I doubt it.

Housing becomes a particular problem as people grow older. People can find themselves with fewer and fewer choices.

Often, right in Montana, people are prematurely forced into adult care homes and institutions just because they can't afford to maintain their homes or rent decent apartments.

Not only is this sad on a person-to-person basis, but it just doesn't make sense as public policy.
The General Accounting Office released a report just this year which revealed that for many older people, the cost of nursing home care exceeds the cost of home care -- including the value of support given at home by family and friends.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with Congressman Claude Pepper, but he is the Chairman of the House Select Committee on Aging, and over the years he's lead the fight for older Americans in Congress.

Well, he has had another really good idea on this home health care problem. I joined him in sponsoring it, and the House should vote on it next week. This legislation would change Medicare to allow unlimited home health care visits. It would also eliminate the three-day hospital requirement for Medicare, and it would get rid of the $60 deductible on home health care benefits.

This has been a long time in coming, and with it, we have just passed an amendment to the Housing Act to develop what's called "congregate housing services." This would provide health care, house-keeping and social services for people living in housing for the elderly.

The whole idea here is to avoid the need for institutionalization wherever possible.

There is one final area I would like to talk to
you about — and that's jobs and retirement as people grow older.

Right now, only 3 percent of the entire civilian labor force in the United States is over age 65.

Frankly, this is a waste of some of our best talent, and the United States can't afford it.

A few years ago the ratio of workers to Social Security beneficiaries was 4 to 1. Now that ratio is 3 to 1. Fifty years from now, if trends continue, it will be 2 to 1.

From a self-serving standpoint, the workers of this country should be encouraging older Americans to stay on their jobs and keep earning. Instead, we have been forcing them to retire, often by law. People earn their retirement, and they should look forward to it, but they should not be booted into retiring before they are ready.

As many of you know, I was a sponsor of the legislation which passed earlier this year to curb mandatory retirement. This has been signed into law, and at the end of September, public employees will no longer be forced to retire at age 70.

Starting in January, the mandatory retirement age limit in the private sector will be raised to 70.

The next step will be to abolish mandatory retirement based solely on age altogether.

One final note, and I'll let you get back to something more exciting than watching an empty podium.
This year Congress passed an expanded and improved Older Americans Act. You should know what's going on and take advantage of it.

There's going to be a new emphasis on senior centers and on home-delivered meals. And the Commission of Aging has been made directly responsible to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. This should put a new emphasis on senior programs within HEW.

I should add that in the category of improvement there is one I sponsored which seems to be working already. This bill permitted airlines to offer reduced fares for senior citizens. Many airlines have started to do this.

I hope I will be able to get out to one of your conventions in person before I'm eligible for these fares. In the meantime, I hope that as many of you as possible will use these fares to come back to Washington and visit.

Good luck to all of you with your conference, and thank you once again.