

# The signing of the Medicare Act into law

President Harry Truman proposed a national health plan in 1945. President John Kennedy had health care on his agenda when he was assassinated in 1963. Lyndon Johnson carried their causes to fruition. The following are excerpts of remarks by former President Truman and President Johnson at the signing of the Medicare Act on July 30, 1965, in Independence, Missouri.

**PRESIDENT TRUMAN** — “Mr. President, Mrs. Johnson, distinguished guests: You have done me a great honor in coming here today, and you have made me a very, very happy man.



This is an important hour for the nation, for those of our citizens who have completed their tour of duty and have moved to the sidelines. These are the days that we are trying to celebrate for them. These people are our proudest responsibility and they are entitled, among other benefits, to the best medical protection available.

Not one of these, our citizens, should ever be abandoned to the indignity of

charity. Charity is indignity when you have to have it. But we don't want these people to have anything to do with charity and we don't want them to have any idea of hopeless despair.

Mr. President, I am glad to have lived this long and to witness today the signing of the Medicare bill which puts this nation right where it needs to be, to be right. Your inspired leadership and a responsive forward-looking Congress have made it historically possible for this day to come about.

Thank all of you most highly for coming here. It is an honor I haven't had for, well, quite awhile, I'll say that to you, but here it is: Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.”

**PRESIDENT JOHNSON** — “The people of the United States love and voted for Harry Truman, not because he gave them hell — but because he gave them hope.

I believe today that all America shares my joy that he is present now when the hope that he offered becomes a reality for millions of our fellow citizens.

I am so proud that this has come to pass in the Johnson Administration. But



it was really Harry Truman of Missouri who planted the seeds of compassion and duty which have today flowered into care for the sick, and serenity for the fearful.

Many men can make many proposals. Many men can draft many laws. But few have the piercing and humane eye which can see beyond the words to the people that they touch. Few can see past the speeches and the political battles to the doctor over there that is tending the infirm, and to the hospital that is receiving those in anguish, or feel in their heart painful wrath at the injustice which denies the miracle of healing to the old and to the poor. And fewer still have the courage to stake reputation, and position, and the effort of a lifetime upon such a cause when there are so few that share it.

But it is just such men who illuminate the life and the history of a nation. And so, President Harry Truman, it is in tribute not to you, but to the America that you represent, that we have come here to pay our love and our respects to

# Medicare 48th birthday celebration in Portland

Retiree groups are throwing a party Saturday, Aug. 10, to celebrate the 48th birthday of Medicare.

The party will be held at the Hollywood Senior Center, 1820 NE 40th Ave., Portland, from 2 to 5 p.m. There will be cake, music, and guest speakers, who will talk about the threats to Medicare, and about ways to improve and expand Medicare for all.

The birthday party is sponsored by the Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans, Portland Jobs with Justice, Elders in Action, the Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens, and United Seniors of Oregon.

H.R. 6675 — the Social Security Amendment of 1965 — began life in the House Ways and Means Committee, where it passed the committee on March 23, 1965, and a final report was sent to the House on March 29, 1965. The House took up consideration of the bill on April 7, and passed the bill the next day by a vote of 313-115 (with five not voting).

The Senate Finance Committee reported the bill out on June 30 and debate began on the Senate floor that same day, concluding with passage on July 9, 1965 by a vote of 68-21 (with 11 not voting).

The Conference Committee to reconcile the differing bills of the two houses completed its work on July 26. The reconciled version of H.R. 6675 then went to final passage in the House on July 27 and final passage in the Senate the following day. The vote was 70-24 in the Senate (with 57 Democrats and 13 Republicans supporting the bill, and seven Democrats and 17 Republicans opposing).

In the House, 237 Democrats and 70 Republicans supported the bill, while 48 Democrats and 68 Republicans opposed it. The final vote was 307-116.

President Johnson signed the bill into law at a special ceremony in Independence, Missouri, on July 30, 1965.

you today. For a country can be known by the quality of the men it honors. By praising you, and by carrying forward your dreams, we really reaffirm the greatness of America.

It was a generation ago that Harry Truman said, and I quote him: ‘Millions of our citizens do not now have a full measure of opportunity to achieve and to enjoy good health. Millions do not now have protection or security against the economic effects of sickness. And the time has now arrived for action to help them attain that opportunity and to help them get that protection.’

Well, today, Mr. President, and my fellow Americans, we are taking such action — 20 years later ...

... Because the need for this action is plain; and it is so clear indeed that we marvel not simply at the passage of this bill, but what we marvel at is that it took so many years to pass it. And I am so glad that Aime Forand is here to see it finally passed and signed — one of the first authors.

There are more than 18 million Americans over the age of 65. Most of them have low incomes. Most of them are threatened by illness and medical expenses that they cannot afford.

And through this new law, every citizen will be able, in his productive years when he is earning, to insure himself against the ravages of illness in his old age. This insurance will help pay for care in hospitals, in skilled nursing homes, or in the home. And under a separate plan it will help meet the fees of the doctors.

Now here is how the plan will affect you.

During your working years, the people of America — you — will contribute through the Social Security program a small amount each payday for hospital insurance protection.

And under a separate plan, when you are 65 — that the Congress originated itself, in its own good judgment — you may be covered for medical and surgical fees whether you are in or out of the hospital.

The benefits under the law are as varied and broad as the marvelous modern medicine itself. If it has a few defects — such as the method of payment of certain specialists — then I am confident those can be quickly remedied and I hope they will be.

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes, and their own hopes, eaten away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents, and to their uncles, and their aunts.

And no longer will this nation refuse the hand of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and wisdom and labor to the progress of this progressive country ...”

... And just think, Mr. President, because of this document — and the long years of struggle which so many have put into creating it — in this town, and a thousand other towns like it, there are men and women in pain who will now find ease. There are those, alone in suffering, who will now hear the sound of some approaching footsteps coming to help. There are those fearing the terrible darkness of despairing poverty — despite their long years of labor and expectation — who will now look up to see the light of hope and realization.

There just can be no satisfaction, nor any act of leadership, that gives greater satisfaction than this ...”

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