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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Program to Protect Elderly from Crime

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MUSKIE OUTLINES NEW PROGRAM
TO PROTECT ELDERLY FROM CRIME
(20 Florida Counties would be eligible)

(Note to reporters: The following statement was originally scheduled for delivery by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at a breakfast meeting in Jacksonville. Because of the cancellation of the Senator's schedule for February 17, it is being released as a program statement.)

Older Americans have a vital stake in the 1972 election, not only in Florida, but across the nation. During the course of this campaign, I have emphasized my commitment to major new federal initiatives to guarantee the elderly the quality of life they deserve. Specifically, I have called for far-reaching reforms in the Social Security System -- so inflation will not erode the purchasing power of the elderly; for a billion dollar Housing Security System -- so ever heavier property taxes and rents will not drive the elderly out of decent housing; and for a Health Security System and National Health Insurance -- so medical care for the elderly will not only be within their means but within their reach.

We must also pay careful attention to the personal security of older Americans. They have given us half

a century of contribution and service. We owe them more than streets, beaches, and parks that are unsafe after dark and sometimes even during the day.

Yet the 200,000 senior citizens of this county, like older Americans in every part of the country, are more likely to become the victims of crime than almost any other group. The statistics of the National Crime Commission show that persons over 60 suffer a disproportionately high percentage of major crimes. The same statistics indicate that women over 60 are the most vulnerable, especially to burglarly, robbery, and larceny.

Therefore, I believe the federal government should take three immediate steps to protect our senior citizens from crime.

First, the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration should receive an additional \$50 million a year, to be allocated on a grant basis to local police departments in counties where more than 15% of the population is over 65; more than 15% of the adults are over 65; or there is a concentration of people over 65 in a high crime area.

Second, local police departments should be required to use these grants for the following purposes:

-- To provide special police patrols in areas where senior citizens live and take their recreation, including escort patrols, if necessary.

-- To establish special communications systems so senior citizens can contact the police without delay;

-- To appoint special police liaison officers and special police divisions to work directly with communities of senior citizens and their representatives.

Third, the federal government should establish a system to indemnify elderly victims of crime. The theft of a social security check, the burglary in an apartment, the physical pain of an assault -- if we cannot wholly prevent these occurrences, we should at least provide a means to compensate the elderly for their material losses. This should be the first step toward a general indemnification system for all the victims of crime.

The federal program I have outlined here would enable local police forces to do their job better. It would give them additional resources and incentives to protect older Americans. It can help to make their streets safer and their homes more secure."

Under the standards of the Muskie proposal, twenty of Florida's counties would qualify for a share of the \$50 million federal grant to provide increased police protection for the elderly. Those counties are: Brevard, Charlotte, Citrus, Collier, Dade, Highlands, Hillsboro, Hernando, Lake, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota, and Volusia.

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