

**Statement of
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Associate Justice, Retired
Supreme Court of the United States**

**Before the
Special Committee on Aging
United States Senate**

March 25, 2009

This Committee provided an excellent opportunity for Mr. Gingrich and me to speak about the problems presented by the Alzheimer's crisis before we began our study and the formulation of a plan of action. The Committee members indicated both a genuine interest in the problem and a willingness to consider the results of our study. We have now completed the study and we appreciate the chance to tell you briefly what we have concluded. We thank you for that opportunity.

The statistics have not improved since we were last here. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death. Today, more than five million Americans suffer from the disease. Our study shows that in the next 20 years the number of people with Alzheimer's will increase by more than 50%. Without urgent action, ultimately one out of every two Americans over 80 will have Alzheimer's.

Of course, the disease is devastating not only for those who are afflicted, but also their friends, family and colleagues. Two or more caregivers are required to provide round the clock care of those with severe symptoms. Alzheimer's also takes a tremendous financial toll. The costs of care are substantial, imposing a great burden on Medicare and Medicaid programs. That burden will grow at a staggering rate.

Our nation has no plan for a federal effort to find a solution or to help manage the costs. Such a solution is urgently needed. To that end, we submit our findings and our proposals. There are a number of very specific recommendations but there are three main ones I want to mention here today.

(1) We need a major prevention initiative to be developed as soon as possible with the goal of preventing the onset of Alzheimer's in most people. We believe based on our research and testimony that this can be achieved within a reasonable time with proper funding and support. It will

require public/private initiatives and major data sharing for scientific advances.

(2) We need to reimburse providers of health and social services to Alzheimer's patients for at least 20% of those services. Such value based payments will allow greater care, better coordination of that care, and a higher quality of life for Alzheimer's patients.

(3) We need to establish an Alzheimer's Solutions Project Office within our federal government to direct and implement the various care improvement initiatives. It would greatly help if Congress established a joint Committee to monitor the federal programs.

Our nation has undertaken other major projects that have succeeded in conquering disease. These initiatives are among our greatest successes as a country and our greatest contributions to the world's population. Developing more effective care for those afflicted by Alzheimer's and ultimately preventing and curing the disease are efforts that can, should, and must be undertaken. We urge you to help us with this critical endeavor. Without your support, the costs of care will grow astronomically, hindering our efforts to reduce our mounting deficit, and 50% of Americans at some point in their lives will face the suffering of Alzheimer's.

Thank you for listening.