

Republican Congressional Priorities

By ROBERT J. DOLE
Senate Republican Leader

It will be my privilege to serve as the Republican Leader in the 103rd Congress. I thank the voters of Kansas for again placing their trust in me this past November, and I thank my Republican colleagues for allowing me to continue to serve as their leader.

I also want to congratulate the distinguished majority leader, as he begins his fifth year in that position. Throughout our service as leaders, we have developed a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. This body could not operate in the absence of such a relationship.

For the first time, Senator Mitchell will serve as majority leader with a president of the United States who shares his party affiliation. I know he is looking forward to this responsibility, and I look forward to working with him in these exciting and challenging times.

I listened to the majority leader's statement outlining his goals for the 103rd Session, and I commended him for his eloquence. His is an ambitious agenda, but the people are expecting no less. And I believe that in many of the areas he touched upon, we can find common ground.

As I said yesterday, my Republican colleagues and I stand today with the American people in wishing the best of luck to our new president as he deals with the complex challenges facing America and the world.

I believe these challenges can be met only if Democrats and Republicans work together. I have long been a great believer in the strengths of our two party system — and those strengths can most clearly be seen when we work together to do what is right.

Working With a Democrat President

I know that working with Republicans is a new area for the president. As governor of Arkansas, he dealt with a legislature which consisted almost entirely of Democrats. And though there are only 43 Republicans in the Senate, our rules provide those 43 senators — indeed they provide every single senator — with a great deal of power.

It is not my intention to use that power to constantly block President Clinton's proposals or the will of the Senate. Indeed, as you have seen in the Cabinet confirmation hearings. And — within hours of President Clinton taking the oath of office, — we confirmed the first three members of his Cabinet.

But let me be clear in saying that I expect there will be times where my colleagues and I will disagree with the direction in which President Clinton is steering the ship of state.

As Republicans, we are committed to less taxes, less spending, less government, less regulation, and a strong and secure America. And when President Clinton's proposals stray from those principles, we won't be afraid to speak out — just as Senator Mitchell and the Democrats spoke out when they disagreed with President Bush and Reagan. The American people expect no less.

Clinton Inherits a Better America

I have paid tribute to the remarkable career of President Bush but it is worth mentioning here that the nation President Clinton inherits is much for the better because of 12 years of Republican leadership in the White House.

When the Reagan-Bush Era began in January, 1981, America was in danger and decline. Our economy was in shambles. Interest rates and inflation had gone through the roof. Abroad, Americans were held hostage, and the Soviet Empire was bristling with nuclear arms and hostile intentions.

What a difference 12 years have made. Thanks to Ronald Reagan and George Bush, America made a remarkable comeback. Presidents Reagan and Bush presided over the biggest and longest economic expansion in United States history. During that time, interest rates were cut in half, and then some, and inflation became practically non-existent.

The economy hit some rough spots during the past years, but recent figures prove that President Bush was right. Anyone who squeezed their way through the stores this Christmas knows that the recession is over and the Bush recovery is well under way.

Most importantly, the Cold War was finally brought to an end, as Communism collapsed under the weight of its own incompetence and the steady resolve of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and the American people.

Our allies agree that America is the only remaining undisputed military

and moral super power on the face of the earth. And our adversaries have no doubt that America will stand up for freedom across the globe. And thanks to President Bush's vision, historic treaties have been signed which have permanently moved back the hands on the nuclear doomsday clock.

The Challenges Ahead

These are facts, and will be remembered in history — no matter how hard bitter partisans try to rewrite it.

It's an outstanding record, but we can do even more. Far too many Americans are jobless, and have not yet felt the effects of the economic recovery. A staggering deficit threatens the economic health of this generation, and that of our children and grandchildren. Countless Americans cannot afford even basic health care for their families. And despite the end of the Cold War, the world is still a very dangerous place, full of dictators and tyrants who prey on their own citizens, as well as other nations.

President Clinton addressed these and other issues during the presidential campaign — a campaign in which he made some very specific promises to the American people — promises such as cutting the deficit in half in four years, a middle class tax cut, a total reform of the welfare system, and reform of our health care system.

As candidate Clinton became President-elect Clinton, some of these unequivocal promises were downgraded to "goals." . . . and I suspect that President Clinton may now re-evaluate some other campaign promises.

Change . . . What Kind?

But the one promise which President Clinton most assuredly won't re-evaluate is one that he made at every campaign stop — and one that he repeated in his Inaugural Address — the promise that he would be an "agent of change."

Yes, the American people want change. But what remains to be seen is what type of change will be proposed. The American people don't need change for change's sake. And they most assuredly don't need and can't afford change back to the failed big spending and big taxing policies of the past. What America needs and what Senate Republicans support is change for the better.

And from our perspective there are a number of areas of concern that are in dire need of change for the better, and that should be tackled during the coming session.

Changing the Economy for the Better

Topping the list of the president's agenda, Senator Mitchell's agenda, our agenda, and the American people's agenda, is the economy. We all agree that the economy is not as strong as it could be, nor is it creating as many jobs as we would like.

President Clinton has often stated that he will "focus like a laser beam on the economy." It is my belief that the best prescription for America's long-term economic health is to have President Clinton and Congress focus the laser beam of change on the deficit.

Everyone in this chamber knows that Congress has been spending more than we can afford. For far too long, we have treated the federal treasury as if it were a giant shopping mall, offering an unlimited supply of merchandise on a no-money down, no-credit-limit basis. The result is a \$4½ trillion debt, which we will pass on to our children's credit cards.

Sacrifice and Budget Reforms

Secretary Bentsen and OMB Director-designate Panetta talked in their confirmation hearing about sacrifice, as did the president in his inaugural address.

Sacrifice is a word that strikes fear in the hearts of many in Washington. It does not, however, strike fear in the hearts of the Senate Republicans. In 1985, we put together the toughest deficit and budget-cutting legislation in history — a package which froze government outlays, deferred COLA's on entitlement programs, and cut 14 federal programs that had outlived their usefulness. It passed by one vote, and only one Democrat crossed party lines to vote for tough but fair medicine.

If President Clinton agrees that tough action is needed, then Republicans stand ready to help, assuming that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle also are willing to join us in telling the public what they need to know, and not just what they want to hear.

Republicans also will be proposing

a series of budget reforms which we have proposed before, and which have long held the overwhelming support of the American people — a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and line item veto authority for the president. These are essential budget trimming tools that have been blocked by the majority party year after year.

S.9: Line-Item Veto

As governor of Arkansas, President Clinton operated under both a requirement to balance the budget and the authority to veto line-items in spending bills. During the presidential campaign, he endorsed giving the president line-item veto authority.

We hope the Senate Democrats will join us in making him feel at home by bringing these ideas to the federal government.

Republicans also are introducing enhanced rescission legislation. This legislation will allow the president to slice out unnecessary spending, and send it back to Congress for a second look.

With enhanced rescission, Congress will be forced to vote up or down on any proposed rescission of spending. Today, Congress can simply ignore any rescissions, forcing the spending to take place, in spite of the president's objections.

Changing Bureaucracy for the Better

One sure way to stifle economic growth and recovery is to strangle it in regulations, bureaucracy, and mandates. Throughout the past decade, Senate Republicans have served as guardians of America's small businessmen and women, opposing an avalanche of mandates and red tape.

Helping Small Business

Indeed, instead of holding small business down, government should extend a helping hand. And now, I have been joined by other Senate Republicans in introducing the "Small Business Investment Act of 1993." This legislation contains a number of items that simplify — that's right, I said "simplify" — small business reporting regulations, and that eases access to capital.

S. 10: Family Leave Legislation

Another bill we have introduced is our version of family leave legislation. There are those who would have you believe that Republicans don't care about working families. That's simply not true.

Not only do we care about working families, but we also care enough not to saddle employers with costly mandates which would put mothers and fathers out of work. Instead, our legislation provides for refundable tax credits for businesses with fewer than 500 employees that provide for up to 12 weeks of family leave. Rather than mandating a "one size fits all" government mandate, we should trust employers and their employees to work out the type of paternal leave plan which best fits their circumstances.

And, yes, we are honest enough to pay for the expense of this legislation through an increase in corporate estimated tax payments.

President Clinton has said that he wants to "put people first." One way he can do this is to ensure that government mandates and government bureaucrats do not run over individual citizens and individual rights. Therefore, I will reintroduce legislation — passed by the Senate last year — which simply requires federal agencies to determine whether any new regulation being published would result in the taking of any private property. If so, then legitimate health and safety reasons must be documented.

Changing Health Care for the Better

President Clinton has strongly committed himself to reforming America's health care system. He will suffer no shortage of advice in this mission. Last year, there were more than 30 health care reform proposals in Congress, none of which had the support necessary to pass. Even the harshest critics of the American health care system acknowledge that the 85 percent of Americans who have insurance enjoy the highest standards of medical care in the world. The United States continues to have the best doctors, the most advanced technology, and the strongest commitments to research and development in the world.

Still, the system is troubled. Health care costs are rising at dizzying rates, an estimated 35 million people are without basic health coverage, and still others are in jeopardy of losing their coverage.

It is clear that our response to the health care crisis cannot be "take two aspirin and call us in four years."

My colleagues and I on the Republican side of the aisle have worked on this issue for many years, and we have proposals and suggestions which we believe will improve the system. But we do not have all the answers, nor all the votes. And the only way to move forward on this issue is through bi-partisan cooperation.

If the debate disintegrates into a political contest, then everyone loses. Therefore, as the Republican leader, I am not introducing a major reform proposal now because I am hopeful we can ultimately work together and avoid the polarization that has plagued us in the past.

We simply must work together — the White House, Congress, Democrats, Republicans, providers, insurance companies, consumers and the government. I am convinced that reform can take place. And that it can be done without creating another government bureaucracy or another government program, or relying on the old standards of giant tax increases and big government mandates.

Rural Health Care Legislation

There is one health care bill which I have introduced — one that focuses on an issue of great concern to me — and to the president — and that's the preservation of rural health care in America.

This bill reauthorizes some provisions that have been critical to enabling rural Americans to receive health care. If they are not reauthorized . . . and reauthorized quickly . . . many of these provisions would expire. In fact, in some cases, they have already done so. If we don't act soon, then some rural hospitals will have to cancel vital outreach services, and some will be forced to close their doors forever.

Changing Our Civil Justice System

Along with our civil justice system, it has long been apparent to Senate Republicans that our criminal justice system is also in need of change for the better.

Surveys reflect the fact that Americans believe that while the economy is the most important problem facing the country, crime is the most important problem facing their neighborhood. And no doubt about it, from one end of the country to the other, in rural as well as urban areas, Americans live in fear.

S.8: GOP Anti-Crime Bill

Today, as in past sessions, Senate Republicans, led by Senator Hatch, will be introducing tough, no-nonsense crime legislation. The proposals contained in this legislation — cracking down on legal loopholes for criminals, and giving law officials the clout they need to make convictions stick, have been debated over and over again by this body. Now it's time to pass them. There is no reason why a tough crime bill cannot be sent to the president within a matter of months.

President Clinton has expressed support for a national police corps — an idea I have long advocated. I know that Senator Hatch looks forward to working with Senator Biden in making this idea a reality, within our budgetary constraints.

S.6: Fighting Violence Against Women

Included in our crime bill are provisions regarding violence against women. I also am introducing these provisions as a separate piece of legislation — as I have done in the past two years.

It is estimated that a staggering 2.5 million violent crimes are committed against women each year. I believe this number is a national disgrace — a disgrace we must have the courage to recognize and the commitment to reform. The Sexual Assault Prevention Act of 1993, which also will be introduced in the House by Congresswoman Susan Molinari, is a comprehensive response to violence against women, both on the streets, and in the home.

Changing Congress for the Better

This January, the House and Senate welcomed record numbers of members. And most of these members came to Washington with a pledge to change for the better the way Congress does business.

Within a few weeks, Senate Republicans will introduce a meaningful Congressional reform package. This package will include proposals to measure the staff and spending of Congress, as well as "housekeeping" measures such as eliminating proxy

(Continued to Page 6)

Republican —

(Continued From Page 4)

voting and strengthening the prohibition of attaching unauthorized appropriations bills.

S.7: Campaign Finance Reform

Just as Congress needs reforming, so, too, does the way in which you are elected to Congress. And today, as we have done before, Senate Republicans will introduce legislation to reform our campaign finance system. Our legislation promotes competition and our two-party system. It does not, as the Senate Democrats have continued to insist during the years, require taxpayers to pay for our campaigns.

Still Dangerous:

Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia

As President Clinton said, the avalanche of freedom which swept the globe under Presidents Reagan and Bush have led to some instability. I suspect that foreign policy, which received short shrift during the presidential campaign, will soon come to dominate many of President Clinton's days.

There are several trouble spots which will demand the president's immediate and constant attention.

Saddam Hussein evidently got the message sent by the Bush Administration and is talking in softer tones, but if there is any constant in Iraqi policy, it's that Saddam cannot be trusted for one minute.

If there is anyone in the world who can match Saddam Hussein for deceit and brutality, it is Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. The new state department report on human rights practices finds that Serbian forces in Bosnia have committed atrocities against civilians on a scale unrivaled since the Nazi Era.

This senator believes that the U.S. objective should not be to slow the slaughter in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but to stop it, and to prevent its spread to Kosovo, where two million Albanians now live in constant fear and oppression. And the goal of the Geneva negotiations should be to reach a settlement that will restore the territorial integrity

and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina, instead of ratifying its de facto dismemberment, thereby rewarding those who have brought suffering and slaughter to the Bosnian people.

In Somalia, some U.S. forces are coming home, but we need to get on with a master plan for restoring stability there and turning control over to the United Nations.

Assistance to the republics of the former Soviet Union, future relations with Vietnam, and fostering the admirable progress of Democratic and economic reform in Latin America are other matters now on President Clinton's plate.

It is also my hope that the Clinton Administration will place a high priority on halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Concern for nonproliferation was one of the primary motivating factors behind the Nunn-Lugar Act, which initiated some truly innovative approaches to the problem of potential proliferation in the Soviet Union.

The Enduring Strengths of the Senate

Before I conclude, let me add that this institution has taken a lot of hits from the media and from some politicians these past few years — some of the criticism is deserved, some of it isn't.

But no one can deny that the enduring strengths of the Senate are great — and perhaps they were best stated by the late Claude Pepper, who said, "Like democracy itself, the Senate is inefficient, unwieldy, inconsistent . . . but like democracy also, it is strong, it is sound at the core, it has survived many changes, it has saved the country many catastrophes, and it is a safeguard against any form of tyranny . . ."

We are all privileged, indeed, Mr. president, to serve in this safeguard.

In closing, let me again express my desire, and the desire of Senate Republicans, to work with our new president, with the distinguished majority leader, and with the American people, to bring change for the better to America and to the world.