

The 1996 presidential season begins ... any minute now

An AP News Analysis
By WALTER R. MEARS
AP Special Correspondent
WASHINGTON — No hurry, would-be White House challengers are saying. The 1996 presidential campaign can wait.

It won't and they won't. "We've got plenty of time to worry about the next election," President Clinton said. "The American people are sick of the one they just had..."

Clinton and the Democrats certainly are, with resurgent Republicans in command of Congress for the first time in four decades, a sweep in which no GOP incumbent was defeated, only Democrats.

And next election, the incumbent in chief would be atop the Democratic ticket, seeking his second term. The lineup of White House-minded Republicans is already forming, and in promising circumstances like these, none of them wants to be at the rear.

Once 1996 begins, it's all going to happen in a hurry. By the end of that March, about three-quarters of the delegates needed to win the Republican nomination will have been elected. It will be costly, quickly, with expensive big state presidential primaries shift-

ing to the start of the schedule instead of coming at the end, as in past campaigns.

So it's going to take early money, raised in 1995, for a shot at winning what almost certainly will be a political sprint, not a marathon. How much is guesswork: \$20 million, \$25 million, perhaps.

What isn't guesswork is that there will be a Republican crowd competing to raise it. That's the pattern in open nomination years, when one party or the other is choosing a challenger to take on an incumbent.

Clinton's campaign was the exception. At his midterm, President Bush was riding so high in job approval polls that a succession of likely challengers recalled they had other things to do. Clinton was nominated over a fragile field, while Bush was plunging toward defeat.

While that broke one pattern, it proved another: in politics, nothing is permanent except change. Clinton looks vulnerable now; he swallows blame for what happened to the Democrats on Tuesday, his job approval rating in voter exit polling was a stagnant 44 percent; more of those voters said they'd opt for a Republican

for president in 1996 than for him, 36 percent to 31 percent.

Another bleak statistic: only about two-thirds of the people who said they had voted for Clinton in 1992 told exit interviewers they would again in 1996, about a quarter of them said they didn't know, about 10 percent said they would prefer a Republican or an independent.

Numbers like those entice Republican challengers. Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, on a roll as chairman of the campaign for GOP senators this year, said presidential ambitions won't affect his job performance, but he isn't going to defer them.

"You're going to see a lot of people who figure the job is going to be open," said Gramm, making his TV interview rounds with frequent reminders that he campaigned for Republicans in 41 states over the past three months.

Sen. Bob Dole, the Republican leader, was at it all fall, as were other prospective candidates. Dole, now to become majority leader, said he will decide by March 1 whether to run in 1996, as he did in 1988.

Campaigning for the ticket in the off-year builds credits that help when it comes primary and



THE RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE— Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas smiles prior to a news conference on Capitol Hill Wednesday, to discuss Tuesday's election where Republicans took over the Senate and the House. Dole is considered to be among the GOP presidential hopefuls. — (AP LaserPhoto)

convention time. Take Richard Nixon, who took the road for GOP candidates in 1966 and took a big boost toward the White House when they gained 48 seats.

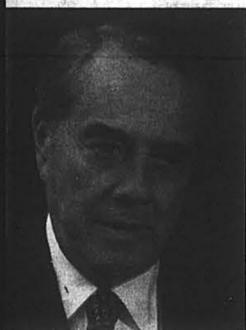
The prospective field has familiar and new faces — former Republican Cabinet members like La-

mar Alexander, James A. Baker III, Dick Cheney, Jack Kemp, former Vice President Dan Quayle, and a crop of re-elected Republican governors, people like William Weld of Massachusetts, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, John En-

vich of Ohio. Gov. Pete Wilson of California, comeback winner in the state with 20 percent of the electoral votes it will take to elect a president, has said repeatedly that he's not interested in 1996, and had his campaign manager reiterate that on Election Day.

The Salina Journal Monday, November 14, 1994

Dole stays calm about landing on top



File photo
Bob Dole once said his dream job would be to serve as majority leader with a Democrat serving as president. That dream is becoming reality.

Senator positioned to seek presidency

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — The world has flipped upside down, and suddenly Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., is on top. But with Dole, it can be hard to tell.

"S'pretty good," he muttered into the telephone Friday from his office in a standard Dole growl of understatement.

His miniature schnauzer, Leader, picked up no vibes that anything had changed. As photographers circled his master, the dog was flopped on the floor, unmoved.

Tuesday's Republican tide may have rescued Dole, 71, from the minority sidelines, elevating him, once more, to majority leader and holding out the promise of front-runner status if he runs again for president.

But Dole is one to keep his hopes in check. After all, he grew up poor in the Kansas dust bowl and was so grievously wounded in World War II that he was not expected to live. When he did survive, all he looked forward to was an Army pension.

"He never gets too high, and he never gets too low," said his long-time friend, former Sen. Warren Rudman, R-N.H.

"That's very important, whether you're in the infantry or in the Senate. When everyone else is jumping around, he's very steady."

One clue to his new stature is his reading material. "I'm going to read the Truman book," he said, slightly amused. "Everybody's reading it."

He was alluding to White House aides who were rifling through David McCullough's biography to see how Harry Truman, a Democratic president, dealt with a Republican Congress.

In the first two years of Bill Clinton's presidency, Dole, as minority leader, was already the most important Republican in Washington. In the next two he will not only have more power but also a lot of reinforcements.

The whole political equation has tilted in his favor.

"Bob Dole has spent much of his career measuring himself against presidents and finding that he measures up," said Norman Ornstein, an analyst at the American Enterprise Institute.

"He sees this election as a triumph for himself, and that gives him a springboard."

But there are complications. Can he switch from his role as minority leader, effectively thwarting Democratic legislation, to the job of forging a viable Republican agenda?

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The Topeka Capital-Journal, Monday, November 14, 1994

Dole making his move

Back at the Senate helm, Kansas' man on the Hill appears primed for '96 bid

Hinting at that end, a Dole group is using TV spots to haul in cash

By TIMOTHY J. BURGER
and GLENN R. SIMPSON
Roll Call

WASHINGTON — A secretive new tax-exempt foundation set up by associates of Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., who will be the next majority leader, has begun broadcasting advertisements favorable to Dole and critical of Congress on TV stations across the country.

Dole, who is gearing up for a 1996 presidential bid, is said by GOP sources to have raised well in excess of \$1 million through the organization, entitled the Better America Foundation.

The ads, initially budgeted for more than \$1 million, link Dole to Reagan's advocacy of the balanced budget amendment and also cite House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., who is slated to become then next House speaker.

Details of Dole's Better America Foundation have been kept private until recently. It was incorporated on Feb. 4, 1993, "to promote and advocate values and principles espoused by the Republican Party and to urge consideration of such principles for a better America," according to its articles of incorporation.

But it existed mostly on paper until this spring, when Dole's then-deputy chief of staff and executive floor assistant, Jim Wittinghill, left the Senate payroll to head the foundation and open its office on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Jo-Anne Coe, who is the executive director of Dole's political action committee, Campaign America, and who worked on his 1988 presidential campaign, is listed on the foundation's 1993 tax return as its president.

The group's first tax return, from 1993, discloses only \$235,000 in donations to the group. However, its application to the IRS for tax-exempt status projected it would raise \$2.75 million from corporations and individuals in 1994.

Foundation officials last week refused to identify its contributors and aren't required to do so under the law.

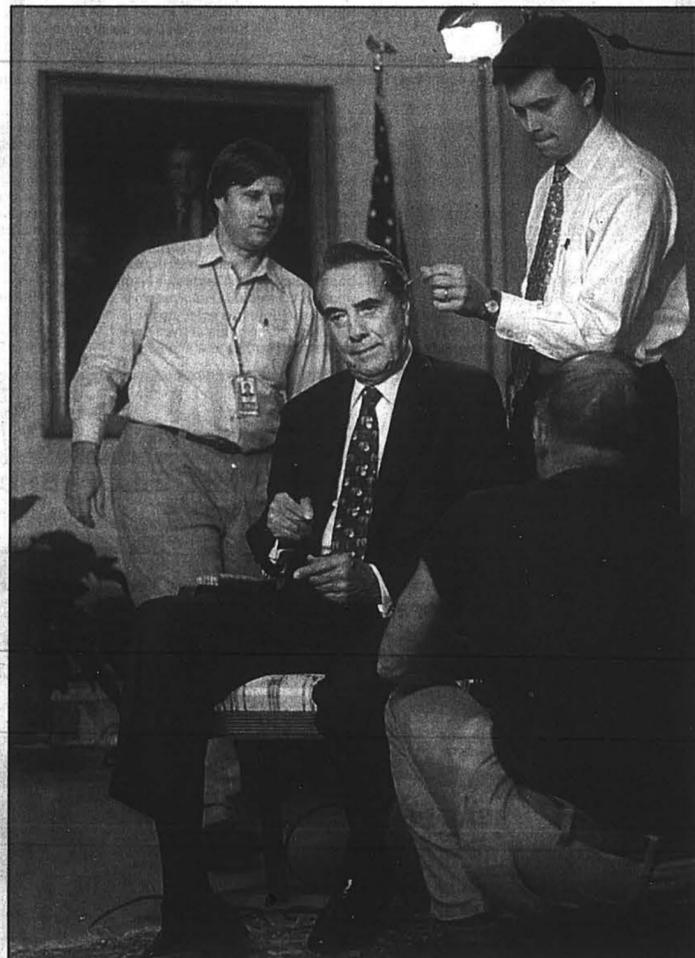
Better America's 30-second advertisement, which began running on CNN on Oct. 31, was produced by GOP consultant Greg Stevens' firm, National Media Inc.

It begins with a picture of Reagan addressing Congress, then walking with George Bush. A few seconds later, Dole and Gingrich are shown, then Dole alone is pictured for a lengthier period in front of a billowing American flag.

"When the budget got too big, (Reagan) fought to bring it under control with the balanced budget amendment, the line-item veto and less government. Congress always opposed him, but we continued the fight," the ad begins.

"Today, with Washington out of control, it's more important than ever. That's why the Better America Foundation was founded to help leaders like Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich fight for a balanced budget, less spending and lower taxes."

Over the president's shoulder, a shot of Dole standing in front of the flag, the ad concludes: "A plan for a better America. Call and help turn Congress around."



Sen. Bob Dole was aided by television technicians before going on air last Tuesday in Washington.

— The Associated Press

was founded and is run by his longtime trusted aides. The foundation's board of directors includes Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., a key Dole ally in the Senate, who also is described in its March 1993 application for tax-exempt status as the chairman and chief executive officer.

McConnell didn't disclose his relationship to the foundation in his 1993 financial disclosure form, despite the fact the foundation received incorporation status in early 1993.

According to financial disclosure rules, senators must disclose any position they hold, paid or unpaid, with any organization, including any non-profit organization. Attorney Bruce Hopkins, an authority on the law of non-profit foundations, said in an interview earlier this month the ads the foundation is running probably aren't a violation of the group's tax status or federal election law despite Dole's looming presidential bid and the fact the ads began running a week before the 1994 Congressional elections.

After hearing the script of the ad, Hopkins said it falls into a gray area that isn't addressed in the law. "This is not lobbying, this is not political campaign activity," he said. "It's in this amorphous area of taking stances on current social issues."

No time to revel: Dole knows GOP expected to deliver

By LARA JAKES
The Capital-Journal

WASHINGTON — It was midnight in the nation's capital, but Kansas Sen. Bob Dole was still smiling. And for good reason.

"Let me tell you what's happening," the Republican leader said at the exuberant GOP victory rally early last Wednesday morning. "We're winning. And the best is yet to come."

After an often bitter campaign, the Republican Party electrified the nation last Tuesday by making a clean sweep of Congress and 30 gubernatorial seats.

The way the two parties had planned election night celebrations

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Dole hopes to prove GOP can reach goals

Can he serve as both majority leader and run a presidential campaign — especially when two fellow Republicans, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas and Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania also have their eyes on the White House?

And what of the feisty new speaker of the House, Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., who once called Dole "the tax collector for the welfare state?" Gingrich's incendiary pronouncements in the post-election frenzy all but eclipsed the understated Dole and will egg him further to the right than he might want to move.

For a while, at least, Dole and Gingrich will try to work in tandem.

"They are both serious people who understand they are yoked together," said William Kristol, a Republican theoretician. "The success of each is linked to the other, and the Republican Congress needs to succeed."

But this is an odd pairing. Where Gingrich is expansive, verbal and visionary, Dole is laconic, flinty and tactical.

Where Gingrich delegates authority, Dole is stringently self-reliant.

Where the boyish Gingrich is exuberant over his new-found power, the darker Dole is stepping gingerly, casting himself as the cooler head, profoundly aware that the impatient voters who gave them strength can just as easily snatch it away.

"He knows this is a test," said Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., a friend of Dole. "Anytime he flunks it, it will be magnified into criticism of any presidential aspirations."

In contrast to Gingrich, who will likely become the speaker with the blueprint in the "Contract With America," Dole appears to be improvising. His vision, it seems, is whatever works.

"He has an ideology, but he is not an ideologue," Ornstein said. "He does not have the sharp set of priorities that Phil Gramm or Newt have. He is more skilled in legislating, but this is not prized by his more confrontational colleagues."

Dole used to say that his dream was to be majority leader with a president of the opposite party. But now that such an opportunity presents itself, he hesitates to specify what he wants to do.

"Obviously, I'm getting all these suggestions from new members," he said. "But until we coordinate everything with the committee chairmen and the governors, it would be too early to say 'This is Bob Dole's agenda,' because it may not be anyone else's."

What, then, is his goal as majority leader?

"To try to give people some feeling that we can get something done other than appropriations bills," he said. "There ought to be some way with this modern technology — we do nothing all day and don't start voting until dark. Members should be disciplined enough to work in the daytime."

Dole, who was elected to the House in 1960 and to the Senate in 1968, has served longer as a Republican in Congress than anyone else. He said he knew that the institution was scorned.

"People consider us part of the problem," he said, but he cannot mask his skepticism about overhauling it.

"If we do lobbying reform, ethics reform, congressional reform, make all these laws apply to us, is that enough?" he asked. "We did some things two years ago, and I didn't see anybody ride in here and say, 'Boy, this is great.'"

Dole said he would decide by mid-February whether to run for president.

"He has to sort out how he can manage the running of the Senate as well as manage a campaign," Rudman said. But he added that Dole also had to learn, contrary to his nature, to be less controlling.

"This is a totally self-made man who had to fight every inch of the way," Rudman said.

Dole's presidential aspirations also depend, in part, on whether Simpson, a longtime ally, is elected majority whip.

"Dole is very comfortable with Simpson running the Senate in his absence," Rudman said.

Dole's previous national campaigns have not been successful. For one thing, he is not a big-picture communicator. For another, Americans like their leaders sunny and optimistic, and Dole, famous for his acid wit, often seems to glower.

"In small groups you love him," said another friend, Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah. "But in larger groups, his sardonic humor doesn't carry him well."

In 1971, former Sen. William Saxbe, a Republican from Ohio, called Dole a hatchet man who seemed so mean that he "couldn't sell beer on a troop ship." Some Republicans blamed Dole's surly demeanor for President Ford's loss to Jimmy Carter in 1976, when Dole was Ford's running mate.

Dole seared his bitter partisanship into the public consciousness that year in his debate with Walter Mondale, when, referring to his war injury, he blamed the Democrats for every American war in the century.

The public reaction was so negative that he sought out an image consultant and paid her to help him appear more likable.

He might want to ask for a refund. The latest New York Times/CBS News poll found that his favorable rating has plunged since 1987 while his unfavorable rating has more than doubled; today, 25 percent of all Americans view him negatively, the same number who view him positively. The other 50 percent are undecided.

In addition, Dole will be 73 by the time of the 1996 elections and will have spent 36 years on the national stage.