

Governors mum on plans for run at the presidency

By Dan Balz
The Washington Post

When it came to 1996 politics at last week's meeting of the Republican Governors' Association, the governors-who-might-be-president all adopted the same pose: They did not want to answer the question, but they were dying to be asked.

When the Republican governors gather for their annual conference a year from now, they will be meeting in New Hampshire. By then, all

pretense will be gone, and the betting is that one or more of those who just won landslide re-election victories will be chasing the GOP nomination.

Incoming Senate majority leader Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., was the only politician willing to discuss 1996 from the podium at the governors' meeting in Williamsburg this week — if only in jest. In the middle of a speech about the upcoming challenges for his party, he

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digressed to comment on President Clinton's appearance in an Indonesian batik shirt during the president's recent trip to the Far East.

"I thought about (it)," Dole said. "If you have to wear those kinds of shirts, I'm not certain I want to run."

Other than that, presidential

politics was mostly corridor activity in Williamsburg — and there was plenty of activity.

Former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, determined to bring a non-Washington, if not anti-Washington, perspective to his unannounced run for the presidency, arrived Sunday and stayed through Tuesday, chatting up his fellow former governors and looking for possible endorsements.

Alexander brought along a siz-

able entourage that included campaign-manager-in-waiting Dan Pero and his wife Colleen, both of whom have been top aides to Michigan Gov. John Engler; Tom Rath, former New Hampshire attorney general and key player in GOP politics in that crucial state, and Mike Murphy, the long-maned media consultant slated for a top job in the Alexander hierarchy.

Sen. Phil Gramm (Texas) had former Texas Republican Party

chairman Fred Meyer on hand to watch after his interests, then suddenly showed up himself Monday afternoon to hobnob with the governors a few hours.

The Alexander brigade chortled at Gramm's arrival and claimed credit for enticing him to leave Washington and come to Williamsburg. But the Texas conservative feigned ignorance of a potential rival on the scene.

"I didn't even know Lamar was here," Gramm said in his deepest and most sincere drawl.

Not likely. This is the same man, after all, who just happened to be out walking in the Manchester, N.H., home territory of Republican Gov. Steve Merrill on Halloween weekend.

But if Dole, Gramm and Alexander are likely presidential candidates, what of the governors? Half a dozen figure into presidential speculation at this point: California Gov. Pete Wilson, Massachusetts Gov. William F. Weld, Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, Ohio Gov. George V. Voinovich, and Engler. Voinovich and Whitman, however, are seen mostly as vice-presidential prospects.

Engler is the new father of triplets and not expected to be a candidate, despite his big re-election victory. But given the enthusiasm he brings to politics, he is likely to want to play an influential role in the nomination fight.

Alexander already is in pursuit of Engler's support and there was talk among the governors that Engler hopes to put together a Midwest block in behalf of Alexander's candidacy.

That could get complicated if Thompson, whose work on welfare reform and education has drawn national attention, decides to become a candidate. Some governors believe he wants to run but might have trouble raising the \$25 million to \$30 million needed to be a serious candidate in 1996.

Some governors also think Weld, who is fiscally conservative but supports abortion rights and gay rights, is ready to run, and at the governors' meeting this week, his allies were trying to gather intelligence on the Alexander-Engler axis.

Dole wants hearings on Korea deal

WASHINGTON — The deal with North Korea to dismantle that country's nuclear program may not be in the U.S. national interest, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole said Sunday.

Dole, speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press," said he would await Senate hearings on the North Korean agreement before making any moves to block it.

But he said the United States appeared to come out on the short end of the deal that promises the Pyongyang government \$4 billion in international aid in exchange for promises to end its nuclear program.

"North Korea is known not to keep its promises. We still don't have full inspection in North Korea," Dole said. "I think they got a lot, but I'm not certain what we've got."

Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, was quoted by The New York Times on Sunday as saying that he would try to stop the United States from carrying out a promise to supply North Korea with oil while other countries, mainly Japan and South Korea, help the communist North build a nuclear energy program based on light-water reactors.

It is more difficult to extract weapons-grade plutonium from such reactors than from the one North Korea now has. North Korea has denied it is reprocessing spent fuel from an experimental nuclear complex to build atomic weapons, but it has balked at international inspections of the complex.

In the agreement reached last month, North Korea said it would freeze and eventually dismantle all of its nuclear facilities by 2003 in exchange for economic aid and diplomatic recognition from Washington.

"It may not be in our national interest to proceed with this deal," Dole said. "So I support Sen. Murkowski in opening up, having the hearings, and let's take a look at it and see what we've really got."

Murkowski is in line to chair the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on East Asian affairs. Other Republicans such as Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah have also charged that the administration gave up too much in reaching the agreement with the North Koreans.

Dole criticized the administration for failure to consult with Congress on foreign policy issues in general. "Everything is sort of secret, or they operate in the dark, and we're not told until after they make some deal with North Korea."

Administration officials have countered that the whole deal could unravel if Congress tries to change any part of it.

Appearing Sunday on CNN's "Inside Edition," Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, called the deal "very questionable."

"If we are required to approve or disapprove of this deal based on what I know today — and I'm always subject to looking at the facts — based on what I know today, I do not support the deal we struck with North Korea," Gramm said.

House to vote today on GATT

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Clinton assembled the economic stars from eight previous administrations on Monday to give a final push for congressional approval of a 124-nation trade agreement.

"We have to do it now. We can't wait until next year," he declared.

Supporters predicted the rewrite of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade would sail through the House on Tuesday with perhaps as many as 60 votes to spare.

But they suffered two setbacks in the Senate on Monday with the announcements that Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Sen. Hank Brown, R-Colo., would oppose the agreement.

"We have to do it now. We can't wait until next year."

— President Clinton

Baucus had voted for the pact when it cleared the Senate Finance Committee in October. He said he had switched because of growing concern that the World Trade Organization was a threat to U.S. sovereignty, in part because voting wouldn't reflect a country's economic size.

Brown said he too had started out as a supporter but switched after studying the agreement in preparation for taking a quiz Monday as part of a bet with consumer advocate Ralph Nader, a GATT opponent.

Even before the announcements by Brown and Baucus, the fate of the trade deal was less certain in the 100-member Senate, where it must win 60 votes on a procedural question of waiving the Senate's budget rules.

However, administration officials expressed confidence they can still prevail. Clinton spent part of his day telephoning undecided senators.

Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Rufus Yerxa said that opponents were wrong to attack the one-country-one-vote rule because in reality the WTO, like GATT, will make no major decisions without unanimous consent.

The 22,000-page agreement slashes tariffs by an average of 38 percent worldwide and expands the rules of world trade into new areas

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Dole leads charge for pact, but other Kansans undecided

By CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Once a skeptic, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole is now a key proponent of a new world trade treaty, but others in the Kansas congressional delegation remained undecided Monday as a House vote neared. In the House, Republican Reps. Pat Roberts and Jan Meyers indicated they would support the

123-nation General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was scheduled for a vote today.

Among the two lame-duck Democrats, Rep. Jim Slattery was undecided and Rep. Dan Glickman remained opposed, aides said Monday.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., was studying Dole's agreement with President Clinton aimed at addressing several key

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issues, including GATT's impact on U.S. sovereignty.

Despite critical newspaper ads and threats from Ross Perot to start a third political party if GATT were approved, Dole said he expects there will be 60 votes in the Senate needed to pass the treaty on Thursday.

A key feature of the Dole-Clinton agreement is establishment of a way for the United States to back out of GATT's World Trade Organization if rulings in trade disputes threaten U.S. interests.

"My intention was always to fix it, never to kill it," Dole said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" program.

Meyers said the changes ensure that Congress has sufficient oversight of GATT and that other countries won't be able to undermine U.S. environmental and labor laws.

"These safeguards on the authority of the WTO ease my concerns with the sovereignty question and make me much more comfortable with GATT," Meyers said.

As for Perot — who last week

staged a major anti-GATT rally in Wichita — Dole said the treaty wasn't much of an issue during the recent political campaigns.

"He can certainly start a third party. I hope he would not," Dole said. "He asked for Republicans to be elected. He didn't say ... if they oppose GATT. He didn't make that a condition."

Of perhaps greater interest in Kansas, Dole extracted promises from the Clinton administration not to cut agricultural subsidies to a greater extent than any other government program. Dole obtained commitments to improve the Export Enhancement Program and for oilseed products to get export promotion funds.

Glickman, who was defeated in his bid for a 10th term, opposed the pact before the election and hadn't signaled any change of heart by Monday. Glickman, however, is a candidate to be Clinton's secretary of agriculture — and the president wants GATT.

Slattery is just now beginning to focus on the GATT vote following his defeat in the Kansas governor's race, an aide said.

GATT: Easy passage expected today in House

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such as agriculture, services and protection of copyrights and patents. It creates a more powerful World Trade Organization to referee trade disputes and eliminates the power of any one country to block an adverse trade ruling.

During the GATT pep rally in the East Room, the administration produced a letter signed by two former Republican presidents, Gerald Ford and George Bush, and Democrat Jimmy Carter, urging approval.

Clinton acknowledged fears that the agreement, by lowering U.S. trade barriers as well as those of other countries, would mean U.S. workers would face even more competition

from low-wage workers in other countries.

But he said in an increasingly integrated global economy, all countries had to be willing to compete internationally.

"There is no other way to deal with this. There is no easy way out," he said. "This will help to solve the underlying anxiety that millions and millions of Americans face."

But at a Capitol Hill news conference, a leading Senate opponent, Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., asked if it was fair to make American workers "compete against a 12-year-old working 12 hours a day for 12 cents an hour."

GATT opponents, however, all but conceded defeat in the House. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., said anti-

GATT forces hoped to get 150 to 180 votes in opposition, far short of the 217 they would need to kill the deal.

Rep. Sam Gibbons, D-Fla., acting chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said GATT should clear the House with 270 votes.

Consumer activist Ralph Nader said opponents were concentrating their efforts on the Senate, where the deal must first win 60 votes to waive Senate budget rules because the pact covers only about one-fourth of the estimated \$40 billion in tariff revenues that will be lost over 10 years.

U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor refused to disclose the administration's vote count in the Senate, but he said a deal reached last week to meet concerns of Senate

Republican leader Bob Dole of Kansas about the WTO had brought "a number of Republicans on board."

The administration, which next year will be forced to work with a Congress controlled by Republicans, was calling the GATT vote the first test of whether the two parties can work together.

It assembled officials from the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan and Bush administrations for the East Room gathering, similar to a bipartisan pep rally held last year right before crucial votes on the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico. The group included five former winners of the Nobel prize in economics who had served in past administrations.

Dole rejects reported peace offer

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Sen. Bob Dole criticized a possible offer to Bosnian Serbs to modify a rejected peace plan, and said Tuesday that Senate Republicans will press to allow arms sales to Bosnia's government.

The Clinton administration reportedly might allow a confederation between rebel Serb territory in Bosnia and the republic of Serbia to end the 31-month-old war.

"The last thing we need is another American change of position on Bosnia," said Dole, the incoming Senate

majority leader, after a day of talks at NATO headquarters.

European officials said the Kansas Republican's talks with NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes were dominated by NATO's efforts in Bosnia and Dole's criticism of the European allies.

Dole said the Republican-dominated Congress that takes office Jan. 4 will step up pressure on President Clinton to unilaterally lift the arms ban on the Bosnian government, according to diplomats.

"The president of the United States is going to have to make a decision" by February, Dole said.