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# GOP star Kim Wells ready to help Dole

By Chris Koger  
The Hutchinson News

Kim Wells has much to be proud of.

He took over the helm of the Kansas Republican party in 1990, just as incumbent Governor Mike Hayden lost to Democrat Joan Finney. He has since helped the party rebound from the financial problems it suffered because of that, tripling the donor base.

Wells has also seen the sweeping Republican triumphs Kansas legislators enjoyed on the state and national level during the November election.

Wells is not, however, looking to the past too much these days. The Garden City native, now living in Lawrence, recently announced that he will not seek a third term as the Republican state chairman of Kansas, and speaks of a role in a possible presidential bid for Sen. Bob Dole.

"It's not a job you can do too long," said Wells, referring to his decision to relinquish the chairman's job, which is infinitely more demanding during election years.

"We had a very good year. I had really only intended to serve one term, but I'm glad I served the second term. It's probably a good time to leave, because it doesn't get any better than this," Wells said. "The chairman's job is not a paid position, and on any day, you devote an hour or two to the job. During the campaign in the fall of '94, I spent an equivalent of two to three days a week. You definitely have to have a flexible schedule in the way you make an honest living outside of politics."

Wells, a lawyer for Gilmore and Bell in Kansas City, doesn't discount a potential run for public office, but wouldn't say where — or in what capacity — he might run.

"At some point, that might happen. I may run, myself, but that's not at the top of my list," he said.

A former intern in Dole's office in the summers of 1969 and 1970 who was later hired to work full-time in his Washington, D.C. office from 1975 to 1977, Wells managed Dole's 1980 and 1986 Senate campaigns and worked for his 1988 presidential campaign. If Dole decides to run again, Wells wants to be there.

"If the senator runs for president, I'd like to help him out, but I'm also here to help Governor (Bill) Graves," said Wells, who was stringer for The Hutchinson News as a Statehouse reporter in the early 1970's. His father, Bob Wells of Garden City, is well-known in Kansas radio, and was part owner of KIUL radio, a for-

# Dole takes step toward '96 White House run

By John King  
AP Political Writer

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole moved closer to a 1996 presidential run Thursday by establishing a fundraising committee and said he would make a final decision in late March or early April.



Dole

Papers establishing the Dole for President Exploratory Committee were filed late Thursday morning with the Federal Election Commission. Such committees are frequently used as a

precursor to a formal candidacy, allowing fund-raising to get under way before a formal announcement.

"I believe we must rein in the government at home and reassert American leadership abroad," Dole said in a statement announcing his move. "I haven't yet officially thrown my hat in the ring, but you could say this is the first step. ... I am deeply honored by the outpouring of support, and it's time to give our donors and volunteers a vehicle for getting involved early."

A 1996 run for the Republican nomination would be the third presidential bid by Dole. His initial 1980 candidacy was short-lived, but he won the 1988 Iowa caucuses to get his second run off to an impressive start. But Dole then

stalled in New Hampshire, where then Vice President George Bush won to begin his march to the nomination and ultimately the White House.

At 71, many have questioned whether Dole is too old to make the race. He would be 73 in 1996, and only Ronald Reagan has been elected president at that age. But the Kansas senator has remarkable stamina and quieted some of those concerns with an aggressive travel schedule on behalf of Republican candidates during the 1994 campaign.

So far, Texas Sen. Phil Gramm is the only Republican to have filed a declaration of candidacy, and he plans a formal announcement on Feb. 24. Close behind will be former

Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, who already has formed an exploratory committee and plans to announce his candidacy in late February or early March. That is also the likely timetable for an announcement by former Vice President Dan Quayle, who has told associates recent health problems will not deter him from entering the 1996 race.

Other potential candidates include Patrick J. Buchanan, the conservative commentator who bruised Bush with a 1992 primary challenge, and Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter, who has called for the party to abandon the anti-abortion plank in its national platform. Several GOP governors are also said to be looking at the race,

including Wisconsin's Tommy Thompson and William Weld of Massachusetts.

Dole would enter as the putative front-runner; he now runs ahead of President Clinton in head-to-head polls. But while his post as Senate leader gives him an unparalleled platform among the GOP prospects, it could also complicate his effort because of time demands and the likelihood of controversy as his agenda sometimes differs from the more aggressive and more conservative platform of House Republicans.

In announcing his exploratory committee, Dole said it would be run by Jo-Anne Coe, a longtime Dole political aide.

# Filibuster reform something to talk, talk, talk, talk about

By Tom Webb  
Eagle Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — The next time Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., complains about Senate Democrats blocking and stalling, keep this in mind: Dole had a golden chance to curb gridlock, yet voted to keep it.

A group of Senate Democrats recently tried to overhaul the Senate's filibuster rule, a popular stalling tactic that allows a minority of senators to prevent the Senate from voting at all. Filibusters were rare a generation ago but are now used so continually that some veterans of both parties have banded together to say, Enough!



Dole

"We had twice as many filibusters in the 103rd Congress as we had in the entire hundred years of the 19th century," said Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa. "Clearly this is a process that is out of control."

Harkin has proposed curbing the filibuster by gradually diminishing its power. This wasn't necessarily in his party's best interest, because filibusters most often help the minority, and Democrats are now the minority. But Harkin argued that filibusters are hurting democracy and gumming up even routine matters.

"One might understand why someone would filibuster the Brady Handgun Act," Harkin conceded. "There were people that felt very strongly opposed to that. I can understand that being slowed down, and having extended debate on it. Can you say that about the J. Larry Lawrence nomination? ... Or there was the Edward P. Berry Jr. nomination. There was the Claude Bolton nomination."

But the new Republican-controlled Senate voted 76-19 Thursday to keep the filibuster just as it is. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., joined Dole and all of the Senate's Republicans in opposing the change.

Dole spokeswoman Joyce Campbell gave two reasons for Dole's vote. First, Dole didn't want the Senate distracted from the Republican Party's own reform agenda. And second, Dole thinks the filibuster is valuable in "preserving the rights of

the minority," she said. Kassebaum said: "I think having the ability to filibuster is an important protection for the minority. We sometimes abuse it, we often overuse it, but it's important protection, and it should remain part of the Senate."

Others gave different reasons. Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., said that without the right to talk a measure to death, "These poor little old states like West Virginia, they will be trampled underfoot."

To be sure, the filibuster does empower the minority. It lets as few as 41 of the 100 senators prevent the Senate from voting at all. That's one reason Republicans used it so much last year, to block what they viewed as lousy Democratic bills.

Now Republicans control the Senate, and the filibuster will let Democrats block what they think are lousy Republican bills. But reform advocates view the cycle of revenge and obstruction as a great opportunity missed.

"That's a great failing of the Senate this year," said former Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis. "They could have done it in the first day or two, but after that, it's much harder to do it. Because they failed to act, they're now left with the certainty that ...

the Contract with America can now be delayed in important respects."

The solid Republican vote surprised and disappointed the head of a bipartisan reform group, Action Not Gridlock.

"Immediately after the election, a couple of our advisory committee members, a couple of Republicans, contacted Sen. Dole to see if he wouldn't consider supporting the change," said Sandy Newman, the group's executive director. "But obviously that wasn't something he was interested in doing."

In the old days, senators had to talk, and keep talking, in order to filibuster a bill. That was the practice during the 1950s and 1960s, when senators from the South tried to obstruct civil rights bills, passing the hours by reading day and night from telephone directories and cookbooks.

Starting about 1970, it became much easier. A senator could announce that he or she was blocking a bill, and unless supporters could immediately muster 60 votes, the Senate would move on.

Harkin's proposal would have initially kept the 60-vote requirement but gradually lowered it over a matter of days, to 57, then to 54, then 51.

# Dole doesn't look great in '96, but no one else does either

Bob Dole has taken the first step toward a run for the White House, and Kansans are hoping it means he'll visit more often. He needs to carry the state to prove he's the favorite son, even though he doesn't come see us, or even write or call, very often.

Dole has formed an exploratory committee, meaning he can raise more campaign money. He already has more money than Mexico, but that leaves him short of enough to wage a hot primary war against all the Republican candidates who will want a shot at Bill Clinton.

Clinton is the Coppin-State of politics. Everybody wants to take him on, because he looks like easy pickings. That could change, but right now it seems no more likely than

Coppin State being team enough to win the Big Eight basketball race.

Dole says he will make his final decision on the race in March, but you have to figure he'll run. He wants to be president, he's not afraid of the competition, and this is his last chance.

He stands accused of being 71 years old, and in July 1996, when he would be entering the final laps of the race, he will be 73. If he wants to make "Hail to the Chief" his theme song, he has to try now.

Age right now is not his problem. It is, rather, one of his strengths, because with it goes the experience that makes him the front runner. Experience is the perfect weapon against an incumbent president who is seen as not having a handle on how to run the country.

But, Dole's biggest problem may be another kind of experience, and that's his experience in losing national races. He was a loser as Gerald Ford's running mate in 1976, and in the presidential primaries in 1984 and 1988.

In the last one, he defeated George Bush

in the opening battle in Iowa, but lost in New Hampshire and soon withdrew from the campaign.

So, it's now or never for Dole, and he can win if he can overcome two problems: 1) the fact he supported Oliver North, and it says here that is almost unpardonable, and 2) his losing record, which primary opponents will call to the attention of voters every hour, every day.

Dole could become the first Kansan ever elected to the White House, and he stands a much better chance than the only other one who had a shot at it. Alf Landon had to run against the Franklin D. Roosevelt, the only president who played the kind of schedule he did and retired undefeated, untied and unscored.

The list of Dole's likely primary foes probably will be headed by Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, who has a following among those Republicans who consider themselves to be more Republican than ordinary Republicans. Thirty years ago they separated themselves from common party members by saying, "I like Barry

Goldwater more than you do."

Gramm may not be able to appeal to the masses because he has all the charm, charisma and communications skills of football coach Tom Osborne of Nebraska.

Both are very good at what they do, but neither is a David Letterman.

Lamar Alexander, former governor of Tennessee, is in the race. He has been building a grassroots organization, and that's scary. The last time a Southern governor did that, we got Jimmy Carter.

Speaking of something scary, how about this: Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania is running, and if he and Dole should somehow make it come down to a two-man race, there would be two native Kansans, and two graduates of Russell High School, going for the GOP nomination.

collective seats.

Other possible Republican candidates include James Baker, William Bennett, Patrick Buchanan, Richard Cheney, Jack Kemp and Dan Quayle. None of them goes into the starting gate with the kind of support Dole has.

If you want a darkhorse, how about Pete Wilson, re-elected as governor of California in November. Anyone who can run that state even reasonably well should be able to run this country working only two days a week. Wilson is an excellent communicator.

If it's not Clinton for the Democrats, then who could it be? Sen. Bob Kerry of Nebraska wants to run, and Jesse Jackson would be happy to try, if he can take time off from straightening out foreign affairs and college and professional sports.

What about Colin Powell? He could be a threat, but first he has to decide if he's Democrat or Republican. He could be the candidate who is above the mud of politics, and he could do some damage to the hopes of candidates on either side.

Ross Perot? Please, not again.

# Dole leans closer to announcement in Perot chat

The Associated Press

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole got what amounted to a half-hour commercial for the Republican agenda and his own likely White House bid in a television interview Monday night with a jovial Ross Perot.

Perot, guest-hosting on CNN's "Larry King Live," tried to get a journalistic scoop to rival the one King got when Perot more or less announced his independent 1992 presidential bid on the same show.

Everybody's on the edge of their

seat, Perot told Dole, wondering if you're going to run for president in 1996. "Keep in mind, what better place to announce it than on Larry King Live," Perot said pointedly.

Replied Dole, "Maybe I should ask you that question. We could both announce it here together."

The Kansas Republican noted he has formed an exploratory committee for a potential presidential bid, and obliged Perot by edging a bit closer toward an announcement.

"I think we're leaning in that direction," he said. "I think it's probably going to happen."

Dole managed to get in a plug for Iowa, site of the first presidential test of 1996, during a discourse on cutting government agencies.

"We could move the Agriculture Department to Ames, Iowa. Let's try that for starters," he suggested.

Perot spent his second half-hour with Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D. He spoke approvingly of Daschle's record winning benefits for victims of Agent Orange, and seemed also to agree with Democrats that Americans need details on how Republicans would balance the federal budget by 2002.