

THE WICHITA EAGLE Tuesday, April 11, 1995

"Our problems are not too difficult to handle. It's just that our leaders have grown too isolated from places like Topeka — embarrassed by the values. They seem to have lost the idea that we are, and must remain, one nation under God."



Sen. Bob Dole

"I have come to Kansas with a grateful heart to declare that I am a candidate for the presidency of the United States."

NATIVE SON RISES

Emphasizing conservative themes, Bob Dole comes home to Kansas to launch his third bid for the White House

By Tom Webb

Eagle Washington bureau

TOPEKA — Sen. Bob Dole launched his third quest for the White House on Monday by pledging allegiance to conservative values, hoping to persuade the Republican Party's important right wing that he's their man, too. Before a giddy and cheering crowd, Dole suggested he'd cut taxes, end affirmative action, chop federal arts programs, end federal housing programs, abolish parole for violent criminals, eliminate four Cabinet departments and end the federal role in welfare. And that's just a start, he said.

"As a young man in a small town, my parents taught me to put my trust in God, not government, and never to confuse the two," Dole told several thousand roaring Republicans in Topeka's ExpoCentre.

"Let me make one fundamental belief crystal clear," he later added. "We can cut taxes and balance the budget."

Dole's made-for-TV formal announcement was accompanied by full campaign pageantry: blaring bands, waving signs, peppy speeches and cascading balloons. Organizers hoped

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Mike Hurtmacher/The Wichita Eagle

Sen. Bob Dole greets a cheering crowd at Topeka's ExpoCentre, launching his third presidential bid. Joining him Monday, from left: Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, Linda Graves, Kansas Gov. Bill Graves and Elizabeth Dole.

'Front-loaded' primaries no sure thing

By Richard L. Berke

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Popular political wisdom has it that by next April Fools' Day, Republicans will have picked their nominee for president.

The idea is that with so many primaries bunched together and scheduled earlier than ever before, the contest might be like a drive through Podunk Center, Iowa: Don't blink or you'll miss the whole thing.

But as the experts gear up for the quickest primary race in history, they ought to be prepared for one thing: It might not happen that way.

Haley Barbour, the Republican national chairman, says a swift nominating process is likely "but a long way from a sure thing."

"The schedule has been compressed and front-loaded," Barbour said, "but that doesn't preclude different people from winning different primaries."

Most Republicans do not see it that way. They point to the calendar.

The first votes will be cast at the Iowa caucuses on Feb. 12. Just 44 days later, after the California primary, more than 70 percent of the convention delegates will have been selected. The rapid-fire

process, the argument goes, means that if a candidate picks up steam by winning the early contests, there will be no time to stop him.

Many analysts even predict that the whole exercise will be wrapped up by March 12, when a cluster of Southern states hold primaries.

"This thing will be over so quickly that there will be candidates who are no longer viable but don't know it," said Richard Bond, a former Republican national chairman who is expected to advise the

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to hold the announcement on the steps of the Statehouse, but they sought indoor refuge when faced with lightning, thunder, hail, torrential rains, high winds, near-freezing temperatures and rumors of a tornado watch.

Still, the crowd of happy Republicans stayed high and dry, optimistic that at age 71, Dole's day in the sun has finally arrived. Many are long-time fans. Doris Mackie of Wichita, who belongs to a group called Gold Star Wives — widows of servicemen killed in World War II — remembers cheering for the Ford-Dole ticket in Russell in 1976, and then his presidential attempts in 1980 and 1988.

"We've stuck with him," she said Monday. "I'm feeling a lot more positive about his chances."

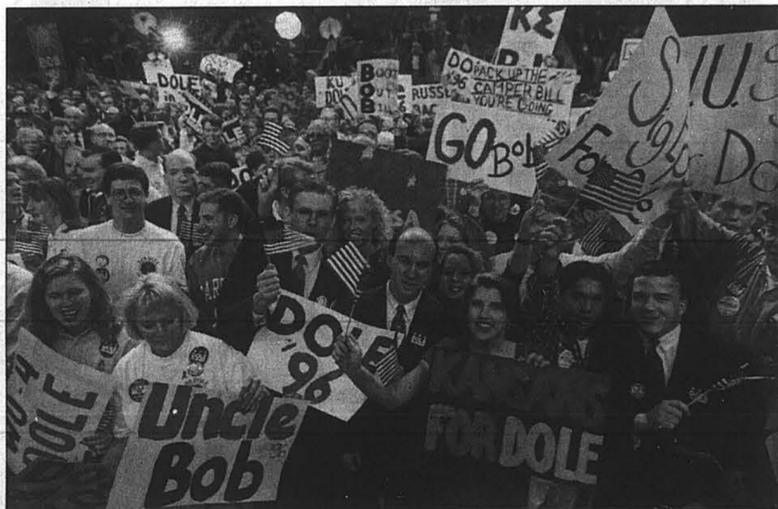
Added Alice Smith, a teacher from Overland Park, "It's now or never."

Dole's announcement in Topeka was the start of a weeklong campaign trip around the country that will conclude Friday in his hometown of Russell. Before the day was out Monday, Dole had left for New Hampshire, site of the nation's first presidential primary.

Early polls suggest that it could be now. By margins exceeding two-to-one, Republicans favor Dole as their candidate over his nearest competitor, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas. Yet the first primaries are still ten months away, an eternity in presidential politics. And Dole is already being badgered by candidates somewhat more conservative than he, hence his early emphasis on bedrock God-and-country values.

Dole's announcement speech was thick with the themes of less government, greater personal responsibility and a return to traditional values — all lessons he said he learned in Kansas.

"Common sense and uncommon sensitivity, that's the Kansas way," Dole said. "It's what made Dwight



Mike Hurtmacher/The Wichita Eagle

Supporters of Bob Dole cheer him on during his speech in Topeka. Organizers hoped to hold the announcement on the Statehouse steps but had to move it indoors because of bad weather.

Eisenhower a great general and a great president. And it's what prompted Alf Landon with his unique wisdom to say, 'There are a lot of intelligent people in Washington, but there are more of 'em in Kansas.'"

Today the Kansas way means less government and lower taxes, Dole suggested. He endorsed a child tax credit for middle-class families, removing the so-called "marriage penalty" in the tax code, and cutting the capital gains tax. Then he'd overhaul the tax code so it is "lower, fairer, flatter and simpler."

He also saluted a broad lineup of conservative ideas: providing school choice for parents, ending parole for violent offenders, trying violent teenagers as adults, ending any American deference to the United Nations, replacing all public housing

programs with housing vouchers, and abolishing the U.S. Departments of Energy, Commerce, Education and Housing and Urban Development.

Other declarations, however, were a little fuzziest. While Dole seemed to scoff at spending tax money on the arts and public TV, Dole only asked questions — "Why is the federal government in the culture business?" — rather than state a firm position.

Dole also never mentioned such contentious social issues as abortion, homosexuality, school prayer and gun control, though they did occasionally bob to the surface. The senator and his wife, Elizabeth, began the day at a large prayer breakfast, where she gave personal testimony about how Jesus Christ has influenced her life.

The invocation was given by Leo Barbee Jr., pastor of the Victory Bible Church in Lawrence, who prayed for a leader who'd be "a man of principle, a man who will stand for the pro-life, a man who will stand for the unborn child."

Later, outside the Topeka arena, pastor Fred Phelps led a small group of protesters with anti-homosexual signs. "Fag Dole," one sign read.

But other Kansans were far friendlier Monday, many proudly waving signs boasting of their five-term senator. One sign read, "Kansas love Dole, America needs Dole, we'll share."

"The trumpet has sounded, the call is clear," Gov. Bill Graves said in introducing Dole to the audience. "And again, as he has throughout his life, Bob Dole is ready."

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campaign of Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas. "They'll be like the proverbial chickens with their heads cut off."

There's even a new name for all this: early closure. "I'm at a loss to find any political scientist who's arguing that front-loading of the primaries will produce anything but early closure," said Robert Loevy, a political science professor at Colorado College who is an authority on the primary process.

Bond and many other Republicans argue that Dole is in the best position to follow George Bush's 1988 strategy: Triumph in the early primaries and then plow through the rest of the states.

But predicting political outcomes has never been a safe pastime. What if Dole falters in New Hampshire, as he did in 1988? Or what if he carries New Hampshire and then New York, but Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas carries that state and several others in the South on March 12?

Or what if no front-runner emerges among the three best-financed candidates thus far — Dole, Gramm and former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander — and Gov. Pete Wilson of California wins his delegate-rich home state on March 28? Maybe it was wishful thinking, but Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, general chairman of the Democratic National Committee, weighed in last week with his view that Gramm was best positioned to capture the nomination.

There are endless scenarios. "If Dole can pursue a Bush strategy successfully, and construct a wall in the Southern regional primaries, he's in," said Stephen Wayne, a professor of government at Georgetown University.

"But if he can't, it's an open field. And it could drag out until the convention in August. That's the worst position for the Republicans to be in: sniping with no leader." Eddie Mahe, a veteran Republi-

DOLE'S ITINERARY

Here's Bob Dole's tentative schedule for the rest of the week:

Today: New York City; Columbus, Ohio; Des Moines; Denver.

Wednesday: Denver; Dallas; Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Thursday: Fort Lauderdale; Columbia, S.C.; Charlotte, N.C.; Great Bend; Russell.

Friday: Russell.

can consultant, said the outcome depended as much on money, and how well that money was managed, as on the calendar.

"If different candidates invest their resources in different ways," he said, "you could get to the end of March and have two or three candidates in play."

A drawn-out nominating process would defy Republican tradition. The last time there was true down-to-the-wire uncertainty over a Republican nomination was 1952, when a bitter struggle was played out between Dwight Eisenhower and Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio.

If the process does end by April, Republicans will find themselves in the odd position of having a nominee who is not officially nominated until four more months have passed. But party officials prefer that to the alternative.

"The chairman of a party always wants a nomination process to start late and end early," Barbour said. "That way, you can get about entering the fall campaign with all your ducks in a row."

But he knows better than to bet on conventional wisdom. Remembering all too well being pleasantly stunned by the Republicans' 1980 capture of the Senate, where the Democrats had held sway for a quarter of a century, Barbour said, "I don't know of anybody who saw that coming."