

Welfare reform threatened by division in GOP

By Richard L. Burke
New York Times News Service
PHILADELPHIA — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and Sen. Phil Gramm clashed pointedly Saturday over welfare in a display of the Republican split that has stalled the legislation in the Senate.



Dole

In an address to the closing day of the Republican National Committee's summer meeting in Philadelphia, Dole, R-Kan., threatened to keep the chamber in session all August if necessary to pass a welfare bill that would give states more control over their programs. To the Senate, which treasures its summer break, that is a near-apocalyptic threat that can complicate the prospects of other bills as well.

But Gramm, R-Texas, who with other conservatives has been blocking a welfare measure passed by the Senate Finance Committee, told the same audience that he would not back off and would introduce his own tougher alternative this week.

"On no other issue is there a brighter line in the sand

See WELFARE, Page 6A

WELFARE

From Page 1A

between where we stand and where the Democrats stand (than) on welfare," said Gramm, who like Dole is seeking the Republican presidential nomination.

"And I believe that we cannot let the commitment we made in the election perish on the ramparts of compromise and status quo and deal-cutting in Washington, D.C." He later acknowledged that he was directing his remarks at Dole, the front-runner for the nomination.

Senate Democrats and administration officials warned last week that it is increasingly likely that no version of a welfare overhaul will be passed this year as a result of the rivalry between the two presidential contenders.

Republicans now are so split that they need some Democratic support to get a welfare bill through the Senate. And Democrats see clearly how the opposition by Gramm and his fellow conservatives would decrease the chances of a deal being struck to reshape the Finance Committee bill more to their liking.

Dole clearly had this in mind when he vowed to overcome opposition from conservatives, whom he did not name.

"It's not easy to put together a welfare-reform package," Dole said. "It's easy to put together if you don't care how many votes that you get. But to get one that will pass is not easy but we're working on it."

The welfare bill approved by the Finance Committee would freeze

federal welfare spending for five years, cancel the guarantee of subsistence income for poor children and give states lump sums to spend on the poor.

But Gramm and other conservatives such as Sen. Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina argue that Congress should cut off welfare payments for unmarried teenage mothers and legal immigrants who have not become citizens.

In addition, they say welfare checks should not be increased for women who have additional children while on welfare. In March, the House passed its welfare bill, mainly along party lines, and it includes many of the provisions Gramm is seeking.

The wrangling over welfare is the latest example of the effect of differences between Dole and Gramm on important legislation, including some of the leading items on the Republican's policy agenda.

Already, the battle between Gramm and Dole has played into the Senate's work on tax cuts, racial quotas and the scuttled nomination of Henry Foster as surgeon general.

In their appearances in Philadelphia, the two other Republican senators running for president, Arlen

Specter of Pennsylvania and a

ard Lugar of Indiana, each called their competitors to stop the partisan bickering and aim their fire at President Clinton.

Seizing on the Republicans' infighting on the issue, Clinton said last week that "some people on the far right are blocking any action on welfare reform" by insisting that the government cut off benefits to unmarried teenage women and their children.

The president has threatened to veto any Republican welfare bill that he does not think would do enough to provide job training and education for recipients or that is too punitive.

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, said of the political impasse among Republicans: "Maybe the best thing would be no thing. It might turn out that it can't be done in this Congress."

'Moderate' Dole aide comes under fire

By Curt Anderson
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It's rare for a congressional aide to be at the center of a political brawl, but that's where Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's chief of staff finds herself.

A steady stream of criticism has been flowing from conservative activists and columnists who argue that Sheila Burke is undermining the Republican revolution by advocating a moderate-to-liberal social policy agenda.

She has recently irritated conservatives by pushing a version of the welfare-reform bill they found objectionable — notably for its failure to stress ways to stop out-of-wedlock births.

"Her approach to this issue is more liberal than the voters who gave the Republicans the congressional majority last November," said Gary Bauer, executive director of the Family Research Council.

Last year, Burke tried to fashion compromise on health-care reform, drawing praise from Democrats such as Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York for

supporting President Clinton's goal of government intervention.

But her actions infuriated conservatives. And they say her reputation as a GOP moderate is no longer a Beltway secret.

"It used to be an inside Washington story," Bauer said. "Now, I'm beginning to get letters from around the country from activists raising her name."

The criticism of Burke, a former Democrat, has become an issue in Dole's campaign for the 1996 presidential nomination. If the Kansas Republican wins the presidency, Burke is a strong candidate to call the shots as his White House chief of staff.

Some conservatives wonder whether she might steer a Dole presidency too far to the left.

"I can see the questions about Ms. Burke looming larger," Bauer said.

Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager, disputes published reports that the campaign is disenchanted with Burke.

In an interview, Reed credits Burke with devising the strategy that derailed Dr. Henry Foster's nomination to be sur-

geon general. He also credited her with helping engineer passage of the executive line-item veto and the balanced budget resolution, all issues dear to the hearts of conservatives.

Reed said no one should assume she is pursuing an agenda different from Dole's. "People are wildly wrong if they think she tells Dole what to do," Reed said. "She is an extremely capable tactician."

Burke, 44, came to Dole's office in 1977 after working as a nurse in California and New York. She rose quickly through the ranks to become chief of staff after nine years and is now Dole's most trusted aide.

Other Senate aides, who spoke only if their names weren't used, described Burke as efficient, effective and occasionally intimidating in negotiating sessions. One said she was an "easy target" because of her high profile.

In a recent interview, Burke called the criticism "absurd" and suggested she is being targeted by Dole's presidential rivals as an indirect way of undermining his campaign.

She said her job is to "process infor-

mation and help him make decisions," not set an agenda herself.

"Dole is not somebody who is going to tolerate a staff person running amok," Burke said. "Anyone who has ever worked for him would attest to the fact that there are none of us who lead Dole blindly."

She said she didn't "have a clue" what job she might have in a Dole White House, dismissing such speculation as premature.

"My priority is getting Dole elected president," she said. "I think it is just absurd to speculate, frankly."

Reed said Burke is the key reason Dole has been able to campaign for president while balancing the heavy responsibilities of running the Senate.

When Dole became majority leader in January, he appointed Burke as secretary of the Senate, a largely ceremonial post she filled — while remaining Dole's chief of staff — until last month. At the time, the praise for her was effusive.

"She knew every piece of legislation at least as well as the person who wrote it," said Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C.

Dole aide catching flak from right

By CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

Some conservatives think his chief of staff is too liberal and worry how she may influence the senator.

WASHINGTON — It's rare for a congressional aide to be at the center of a political brawl, but that's where Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole's chief of staff finds herself.

A steady stream of criticism has been flowing from conservative activists and columnists who argue that Sheila Burke is undermining the Republican revolution by advocating a moderate-to-liberal social policy agenda.

She recently irritated conservatives by pushing a version of the welfare-reform bill they found objectionable — notably for its failure to stress ways to stop out-of-wedlock births.

Last year, Burke tried to fashion compromise on health-care reform, drawing praise from Democrats such as Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York for supporting President Clinton's goal of government intervention.

But her actions angered conservatives. And they say her reputation as a GOP moderate is no longer a Beltway secret.

The criticism of Burke, a former Democrat, has become an issue in

Dole's campaign for the 1996 presidential nomination. If the Kansas Republican wins the presidency, Burke is a strong candidate to call the shots as his White House chief of staff.

Some conservatives wonder if she might steer a Dole presidency too far to the left.

Scott Reed, Dole's campaign manager, disputes published reports that the campaign is disenchanted with Burke.

In an interview, Reed credits Burke with devising the strategy that derailed Dr. Henry Foster's nomination to be surgeon general. He also credited her with helping engineer passage of the executive line-item veto and the balanced-budget resolution, all issues dear to the hearts of conservatives.

Reed said no one should assume Burke is pursuing an agenda different from Dole's.

"People are wildly wrong if they think she tells Dole what to do," Reed said.

Burke, 44, came to Dole's office in 1977 after working as a nurse in

California and New York. She rose quickly through the ranks to become chief of staff after nine years, and is now Dole's most trusted aide.

Other Senate aides, who spoke only if their names weren't used, described Burke as efficient, effective and occasionally intimidating in negotiating sessions.

In an interview Friday, Burke called the criticism "absurd" and suggested she is being targeted by Dole's presidential rivals as an indirect way of undermining his campaign.

She said her job is to "process information and help him make decisions," not set an agenda herself.

"Dole is not somebody who is going to tolerate a staff person running amok," Burke said. "Anyone who has ever worked for him would attest to the fact that there are none of us who lead Dole blindly."

Reed said Burke is the key reason Dole has been able to campaign for president while balancing the heavy responsibilities of running the Senate.

Conservatives see Dole's chief of staff as his Hillary

Her competency brings criticism

By JAKE THOMPSON
Kansas City Star

WASHINGTON — When they speak of Sheila Burke, conservative columnists these days fire poison darts: She's a liberal. She's a feminist manipulating 71-year-old Bob Dole. She Dole's Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Although virtually unknown outside Washington, Burke, Dole's veteran chief of staff, is a powerhouse in the Capitol.

As Dole's top negotiator on domestic issues, Burke has handled behind-the-scenes deals on subjects such as health care, the balanced-budget bill and the nomination of Henry Foster for surgeon general. Senators often go through Burke when they need something from Dole.

Perhaps Dole's most trusted, loyal and powerful deputy, she's

sometimes called the 101st senator. And for that role, Burke has recently been the target of conservative columnists and "movement" conservatives craving drastic changes in Washington.

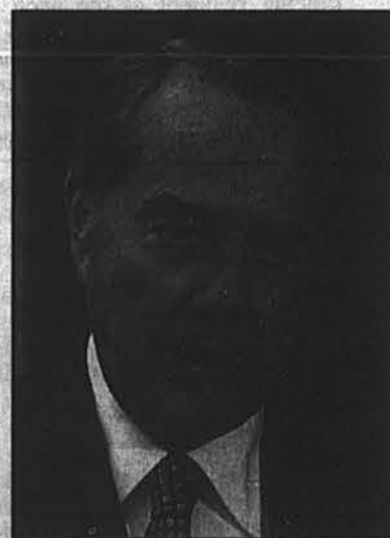
When Dole is focused elsewhere, they say, she quietly charts a less-than-conservative path in her behind-the-scenes negotiations.

They fear that if Dole, who leads the GOP presidential field now, captures the nomination and the presidency next year, he'll tap Burke as his White House chief of staff.

And then they dread she'll quietly pursue a moderate, even liberal course, unbeknownst to Dole, who, by the way, turns 72 on Saturday.

"I haven't even won my first primary yet, and they've already got her ensconced as chief of staff," Dole said with exasperation last week, plopping down for a moment in an office chair.

No matter where she might end up in a possible Dole administration, the former nurse, 44, has long



File photo

Sen. Bob Dole is frustrated by criticism aimed at his chief of staff.

held a pivotal role with Dole.

Born in San Francisco, schooled in Berkeley, Calif., and at Harvard University, Burke joined Dole's staff in 1977. In 1986, he named her

his chief of staff, the first woman to hold that title in the Senate.

Burke is often seen on the Senate floor at Dole's side, her blond hair pulled back, glasses sliding down her nose, answering his queries. She's known for a command of hundreds of details about domestic issues and a keen understanding of Dole and his colleagues.

She's always busy, at times brusque and abrasive.

But, one longtime Capitol Hill aide said, "She's the one who provides real focus for the leader's office."

That focus has prompted objections.

Some conservatives say she is far more liberal than Dole on issues ranging from school prayer to health care to welfare reform.

In fact, Burke offers few clues on her political philosophy. U.S. News and World Report last year quoted her as saying she came to Dole's office as a Democrat with a "bias on the liberal side." But in an interview with The Kansas City Star last year, she said she tried to remain politically neutral.

"She is going to be a political problem for Dole as long as she stays in the highly visible role she's in because she'll give conservatives a reason to question whether a Dole administration would truly be a conservative one," said David Mason, a congressional scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, a conservative think tank.

"It's not a question of competency," Mason added. "It's because

she's competent that she's a concern."

One day last week, Burke clearly was not enjoying her notoriety.

"No one who ever works for Dole ever thinks he's led by anyone other than Dole," she said, ducking into her office, deep in Dole's Capitol warren.

Dole himself seemed mystified by speculation of Burke's power. "I make the decisions around here — she doesn't," Dole said bluntly. He waved away the attacks as indirectly aimed at him.

Veteran Dole aides and watchers guffawed at the notion anyone could control Dole, a legendary non-delegator known for his vast mental storehouse of facts, poll data, Senate history and colleagues' interests.