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FARM FORUM

by United States Senator Bob Dole

* The President's Rural Community Development Message sent to Congress late last week outlined a Special Revenue Sharing plan that allocates to Kansas more than \$20 million.

The proposal consolidates those rural program funds already being spent by states and adds to these combined funds \$179 million for a national total of \$1.1 billion. The Kansas share of this figure is \$20,203,850.

Under this program, states would receive at least as much money as presently allocated for the various rural programs. States would be able to assign these funds to their particular areas of most critical need, as long as the areas are within the general boundaries specified for rural development funds.

* Recently I introduced a bill that affects a relatively small number of Kansas farmers, but a group that is very important to our state's future and is particularly deserving. The measure would amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to permit certain Kansans under 21 years of age to obtain Federal Crop Insurance. It is unfair to deny insurance to young farmers solely on the grounds that they are under age --- as is stipulated by the Act in its present form.

* Two identical bills concerning the Farmers Home Administration were considered last week in hearings conducted by the Agricultural Credit Subcommittee. Difficulty under existing provisions in obtaining adequate funds for FHA direct loans prompted the legislation. Senate Bills 290 and 578 provide for operating loans to be made from Agricultural Credit Insurance Fund (ACIF) resources. The legislation would increase from \$100 million to \$300 million the maximum level of the ACIF to facilitate the new procedure.

Agricultural Credit Insurance Fund is an insured loan fund maintained by the sale of FHA secured notes on the commercial money market. Utilization of the ACIF for FHA operation loans is non-inflationary. The government would not have to provide the total appropriations, therefore, lessening demands on the government budgetary outlay.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture fully endorses this legislation as do most farm organizations. I expect the subcommittee to give it prompt action, making some amendments, and passing it on for consideration by the full Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

* I consulted with Department of Transportation (DOT) officials this week concerning proposed changes in regulations affecting the employment of truck drivers during the grain harvest who are under 21 years of age.

A committee of farm organization representatives is studying the situation and is expected to submit its recommendations to DOT in a few days. The Department indicated it planned to announce new regulations sometime next month.

The two regulations now under consideration by DOT are:

- the 21 year old driver requirement, and
- the 10,000 pounds or less gross weight limit.

At this point, favorable action to the farmer is anticipated.