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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, March 26 --- In a joint statement issued today, U.S. Senators James B. Pearson and Bob Dole and U.S. Rep. Larry Winn expressed their deep regret over the Army's announcement that the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant at Lawrence, Kansas, is to be closed and placed in a "lay-away" status.

The Department of the Army announced that after July 1, the contract for production of 2.75 inch rocket propellant grains will be awarded solely to the Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Wisconsin. The Kansas ammunition plant closure, the Congressional delegation explained, is the direct result of winding down the war in Southeast Asia. Requirements for defense-oriented products are continually being reduced as a result of de-escalating activities in Southeast Asia.

In reaction to the Army's announcement, Dole immediately telephoned Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to express the Kansas delegation's concern, but was advised there are no plans to reverse the decision. The delegation suggested that plant officials explore the possibility of manufacturing alternate products that are not subject to military activities in Southeast Asia, in order to take advantage of the facility and trained personnel in the area.

Concerned for the 1600 employees affected by this closure, Pearson, Dole and Winn expressed their hope that local officials will contact the Inter-Agency Economic Adjustment Committee. This committee can, upon community request, assist areas overcome by serious economic problems. If this federal assistance is requested, a federal multi-agency team can be brought in to help community leaders organized their actions, assess area resources and liabilities, develop an economic expansion strategy and then apply existing federal and other programs.

This effort, the delegation explained, is tailored to individual community needs and capabilities, and would involved both public and private sectors. The Kansas Senators and Third District Congressman stated their willingness to assist the affected community in every way possible to help overcome the economic problems that will result from the Sunflower plant closure.