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# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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## PILOT VA PROGRAM FOR WICHITA

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Senator Bob Dole announced today through his Washington office that the Veterans Administration will launch a pilot multi-agency campaign in Wichita to bring maximum federal benefits to disadvantaged ex-servicemen on a "one-stop" basis.

Working in concert with ACTION and enlisting the help of other federal, private and volunteer groups, the VA will establish a store-front office in Wichita's inner-city to give veterans easy access to benefit information, job counseling, psychological testing, educational assistance and other aids. The office will disburse information of food stamps, social security, medical, pension, welfare and unemployment eligibility.

"It will be an attempt to establish a local 'ombudsman' dedicated to helping the disadvantaged veteran realize the full value of federal programs," Dole said.

A similar pilot center will be established in San Francisco. They are to open on or about April 1, the Kansas Senator said. If successful, the VA and ACTION plan other centers in Hartford, Conn.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Philadelphia, Atlanta, Cleveland, San Antonio, Denver and Portland. The cities were selected, Dole explained, because each has a large veterans population, a demonstrated need for broader assistance and active community and civic programs. Each one also is located in a different federal region and will be able to draw on resources of federal regional planning councils.

Dole has negotiated for some time with Veterans Administrator Donald Johnson on a special program for Wichita to help combat local unemployment problems linked to the energy crisis.

Operating costs for the Wichita office are estimated at \$1,000 a month. The VA will assign three full time employees: a community service specialist, a veterans benefits counselor and a clerk-typist. The ACTION agency will assign 20-30 VISTA volunteers to seek out educationally disadvantaged veterans. These veterans will be directed to special programs at the high school and junior college level.

Community-level support programs are to be generated by the national veterans' organizations, the National Council of Churches, the American Red Cross and other organizations. The National Institute of Mental Health has been asked to provide counselors for the Wichita center.

Plans call for Veterans Employment Service of the Department of Labor, the Office of Education and the Department of Agriculture to provide "finder" volunteers and other support services.

"The whole purpose of this new center," said Dole, "is to bring the veterans face-to-face with the benefits he has earned and the people who can help him achieve a better life. The emphasis is on the disadvantaged young man who has returned from duty in Vietnam or elsewhere, but the facilities are available to the men of all wars."