



NEWS from

U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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DOLE ANNOUNCES HANDICAPPED BILLS

Russell, Kansas--On the anniversary of his first Senate speech on handicapped affairs, Senator Bob Dole today announced that he would introduce two new bills on handicapped affairs after the Senate reconvenes following the Easter recess. Dole annually reviews the needs of the handicapped and proposes legislation to meet these needs.

"I believe we have made progress in improving life for handicapped people in the past twelve months," Dole said, "but a number of areas need further work." The Senator stated that he also intends to continue a close follow-up of the administration of his proposals that have become law. The provisions which have been signed into law, while not as comprehensive as Dole's initial proposals, include an information clearing house, improved housing for the handicapped and the reduction of architectural and transportation barriers. Another measure concerning housing for the handicapped, more nearly like Dole's bill, was recently included in a housing bill passed by the Senate, but has not yet passed the House of Representatives.

Dole expressed hope that the recent designation of Andrew Adams as Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services Administration would facilitate the implementation of measures to assist the handicapped. Adams, with whom Dole is well acquainted, was formerly superintendent of public schools in Kansas City. "I intend to urge that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 be carried out with the highest degree of personalization possible," the Kansas Senator said, "since the maximum rehabilitation potential of each handicapped person can only be realized by putting each development program on an individual basis."

Many handicapped individuals who receive services and assistance under Federal programs need continued support when rehabilitation is completed. Dole's first legislative proposal for the coming year would permit assistance under these programs to continue, according to need, even after rehabilitation is completed.

Under present law, a handicapped person loses eligibility for assistance from Federal programs when he begins earning an income equal to the minimum wage. Since a minimum wage income is not adequate for many handicapped people to cover the extra expenses of adaptive systems, special care and other additional costs, the cut off of Federal support represents a disincentive to rehabilitation.

The Senator's measure would permit a continuation of support, according to the assistance necessary to supplement the rehabilitated person's earned income. For severely disabled persons earning a minimum wage, the Federal assistance level would normally decrease by 50 to 70 percent, but under the Dole measure, the handicapped individual would not suffer a decrease in his standard of living due to a complete loss of eligibility for Federal programs.

Dole's second proposal is to provide rehabilitation and social services to handicapped American citizens who are residents in foreign countries. Over one and a quarter million Americans live abroad as employees of business firms, as students, or retired people. As many as 12 percent of these people may be disabled, based on the average number of handicapped persons in the population.

These people receive none of the state or Federal services available in this country although they generally pay Federal taxes and often state taxes. Due to the lack of services abroad, the disability of handicapped persons often becomes more aggravated, resulting in even higher rehabilitation costs after their return to this country. Senator Dole's measure will require a joint study by the Department of State and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to determine the needs of handicapped Americans overseas. He is also investigating to see if Defense or State Department health services can be used to provide handicapped services.