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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

New Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 225-6521

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 1974

DOLE SEES PROGRESS TOWARD PASSAGE OF NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

SALINA, KS.--Senator Bob Dole said America is, "more and more likely to see a national health insurance law enacted this year."

In remarks prepared for delivery to the State Convention of the Kansas Association of Life Underwriters Senator Dole said, "perhaps the best indication of this possibility was the start, last month, of House Ways and Means Committee hearings. And to expedite consideration in the Senate, the Finance Committee will take the unusual step--starting May 21--of holding its hearings prior to passage of the House bill." Senator Dole is a Member of the Finance Committee and its Subcommittee on Health.

Senator Dole noted that three major health insurance proposals form the basis for possible agreement on a national program. The three bills are the Catastrophic Health Insurance proposals sponsored by Senator Dole and more than twenty other Senators, the Nixon Administration's plan, and the bill introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Congressman Wilbur Mills (D-Ark.).

"I would say that the three plans have a number of substantial similarities. The costs and basic benefits standards under the three proposals are much alike, their levels of catastrophic costs protection lie within a reasonable range of alternatives, and the tie-in to Medicare and other federal programs would be approximately the same under each. These are highly important areas of agreement, and they are a basic reason for my growing optimism about the passage of a health insurance bill this year.

"But the differences should not be glossed over or ignored. There are some major conflicts to be settled. And the ways in which they are resolved will spell the difference between major progress toward meeting our problems and possible disaster for the medical profession and the quality of health care in America.

"I see several major points concerning the basic insurance plans of the three proposals which deserve special mention. First, is the question of Administration. Is national health insurance to be a form of private insurance or a government program?

"Under the Administration and the Catastrophic bills, private insurance companies would continue to provide the basic employee protection, pay out the benefits and operate such as they are doing now. The Kennedy-Mills bill, however, would place all national health insurance coverage within an independent new social security administration.

"Second, there is the question of whether the basic coverage should be mandatory or voluntary. Kennedy-Mills would require every employee to participate in the program, while the Administration and Catastrophic plans would provide the opportunity for each individual to elect coverage or not. And third, there is the question of the financing mechanism to be used. As a government program, Kennedy-Mills would use the payroll tax for the whole program.

"The Catastrophic plan and the Administration's program would both rely on the payment of premiums for the basic employee coverage and on general revenues to finance their low-income protection. The Catastrophic bill, however, would utilize the social security tax to support its separate major medical plan."