



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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DOLE CRITICAL OF SENATE DEBATE ON OKLAHOMA ELECTION

Senator Bob Dole charged today that the Senate's scheduled consideration of the contested 1974 Oklahoma Senatorial election is an attempt to deny thousands of Oklahomans their Constitutional right to vote, and a demonstration of the majority party's willingness to give partisan political matters priority over the pressing needs of the country. Dole called on organizations and individuals throughout the nation who are concerned with an effective and reformed election process to oppose time-consuming Senate debate on the matter.

The Senate is planning to take up Monday the validity of the 1974 Oklahoma Senatorial election returns which gave Senator Henry Bellmon a 3,835 vote victory. Bellmon has been serving in the Senate the past fourteen months pending a ruling on a petition filed by his opponent, Ed Edmundson, challenging the seat.

Edmundson's appeal to the Senate was based upon the Constitutional authority of that body to judge the election of its own members. Edmundson has alleged that voting irregularities in Tulsa County may have resulted in his defeat.

Dole's criticism of the Senate deliberation arises out of his belief that the question has been adequately reviewed within the State of Oklahoma, and that the Senate should respect that State's laws and Supreme Court decision. "The Oklahoma election results were upheld by an Oklahoma trial court presided over by a Democratic judge. The decision of that court was then sustained unanimously by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, of which eight members are Democrats," Dole said. "If there had been any improper manipulation of the election, it surely would have been discovered in those proceedings."

"Framers of the Constitution did not intend that the Senate, as the judge of the election of its own members, should use this power to ignore a State's laws and the votes cast by its citizens in accordance with those laws," Dole continued. "We are abusing our authority by even giving serious consideration to the matter."

"Over the past ten years, expanded federal regulations permitted by Congress have been telling Americans how to live. Now the Senate is claiming the right to tell Oklahomans how they really intended to vote," Dole said. "The Senate, in asserting that it is best equipped to decide the will of the people, has gone too far. We should be working to reverse such trends of federal intervention -- not expand them."