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SENATE VOTES TO PRESERVE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT IN HOME-DELIVERED MEAL PROGRAM

WASHINGTON -- The Senate yesterday accepted an amendment by Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) designed to preserve volunteer support in the home-delivered meals program.

The amendment was offered under the Older Americans Act, which creates an expanded program for home-delivered meals and encourages the government to use existing volunteer groups in the delivery of services.

Dole's language directs that, where feasible, the area agency on aging will fund volunteer organizations for the cost of food alone. Dole noted that in recent months there ha been growing concern that if volunteer groups accept federal aid, they will lose their volunteer identity and become known as just another government program.

"Because the volunteer groups have exhibited their willingness, commitment, and ability to operate this type of program, it seems senseless not to encourage voluntary, self-supporting projects to participate in the new government program," Dole said. "Yet, while many want to enlarge the number of persons they can serve, they don't want to become dependent on government subsidies.

"My amendment is aimed at maintaining the volunteer support by directing federal assistance to be applied to the food costs."

Dole added that the area agency will have the jurisdiction to decide when it is most feasible to provide fundingo n this basis.

"This does not make structural changes in the bill," he said, "but serves to protect and to indicate congressional support for the local programs now operated by churches and synogogues all across our country.

The Senate accepted the amendment by unanimous consent.

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