

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

2213 Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: BOB WAITE
(202) 224-8953

DOLE AMENDMENT WOULD FORCE CANDIDATES TO DEBATE OR GIVE UP FEDERAL FUNDS

WASHINGTON-- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kansas) today announced he will introduce legislation that will have the effect of making any major presidential candidate who refuses to debate ineligible for Presidential Election Campaign funds.

"The public is footing the bill for the presidential candidates. President Carter is receiving \$29.4 million in taxpayer funds, as is Governor Reagan. Independent candidate John Anderson may be eligible to receive an as yet undetermined amount based on his showing in the November election. But these funds were meant to allow the American people to be well informed on the issues and the candidates-- not to finance a 'Rose Garden' strategy. The bedrock of these considerations is the public's right to fair participation in, and fair access to, the information necessary to form a judgement on whom to support and vote for in an election. The usual complaint by candidates is that the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974 and the F.C.C. controls regarding equal time are too restrictive. Candidates always want more money and more air time. Except President Carter. He has been presented with a forum to discuss the issues-- the League of Women Voters Debate-- yet refuses," said Dole.

'No Debate, No Dollars'

"My solution is simple-- no debate, no dollars. Why should we ask our taxpayers to finance a hide-away candidate? President Carter has been fading away over the past four years. In 1977 he held 23 press conferences. In 1978 the number dropped to 18; in 1979 to 12; and this year he's only held five," said Dole. "Now he refuses to debate the issues."

The bill would be an amendment to the Presidential Election Campaign Fund Act of 1974 and would be entitled the 'Fair Access and Information' amendments.

It would read:

"Any major party presidential candidate who refuse to accept an invitation to debate other presidential candidates shall cease to be eligible for Presidential Election Campaign funds as of the date of such a refusal if--

- (1) the debate is sponsored by a recognized National organization;
- (2) such a debate is during a general election for President;
- (3) such organization has received a commitment for nationwide media coverage;
- (4) one or more major party candidate has accepted the invitation to debate; and
- (5) the Commission determines that the organization has made a reasonable effort accomodate the schedules of the candidates and that the candidates refusal is not based on prior commitment which has caused a bona fide schedule conflict.

The amendment would become effect on the day it is enacted.

"It just seems to me that this legislation is needed if we are to insure that the system is to be fair to all candidates-- and, more importantly, fair to the electorate. After all, they're footing the bill for all of this," said Senator Dole.