

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE CALLS FOR REVIEW OF INSANITY DEFENSE

WASHINGTON -- Senator Robert Dole (R.-Kan.), Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, today called for a comprehensive study of the insanity defense in the wake of yesterday's jury decision on accused presidential assailant John Hinckley.

"Although I am not questioning or second guessing the jury's decision in the Hinckley case, the insanity defense as it has developed over the years has been the center of some controversy. I believe the Hinckley case should provide the impetus for an in-depth study of the insanity defense," Dole said. "I am joining today with other members of the Senate in calling for immediate study."

"I have instructed my Judiciary Subcommittee staff to begin a comprehensive review of the federal law as it pertains to the insanity defense, with a study of case law and the statutes that govern the use of the defense. This issue has been raised before in the full Judiciary Committee, but I believe it is time to devote our full attention to the insanity defense -- with a view towards possible reform. There are many questions to be examined: Has the insanity defense become too broad? Does it handcuff or confuse juries? Does it adequately protect society? Perhaps the burden of proof to establish insanity in such cases should be shifted to the defense," Dole said. "These are some of the questions the Hinckley trial has raised."