

BOB DOLE



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DOLE TO VETERANS ADMINISTRATOR: TOPEKA'S COLMERY-O'NEIL
NEEDS ACTION NOW

WASHINGTON -- Kansas Senator Bob Dole today called on the head of the Veterans Administration to speed-up action on the Senator's request for additional nurses at Topeka's Colmery-O'Neil Veterans Hospital.

In a letter to Veterans Administrator Harry N. Walters, Senator Dole expressed his continued concern about staffing inadequacies at the Topeka veterans facility.

"As you know, we are in agreement that Colmery-O'Neil is understaffed. In July 1983, I brought to your attention an American Legion report alleging staffing inadequacies at the center. As a result of VA site visits, it was determined by a VA nurse consultant that the nursing staff was insufficient to meet the needs of patients at Colmery-O'Neil. At an October meeting, I was informed that the resource allocation committee would attempt to reallocate funds to enable the hiring of 21 Registered Nurses at Colmery-O'Neil, a development which encouraged prospects for alleviating some of the problems at the center," said Dole.

"I understand that the resource allocation committee is currently reviewing the staff proposal to add 21 R.N. positions at Colmery-O'Neil. Apparently, an assessment of staffing inadequacy at several VA medical centers was necessitated in order to determine the appropriateness of the proposed allocation of nursing staff positions for Colmery-O'Neil," said Dole. "I look forward to an expeditious decision alleviating the serious staffing shortage currently plaguing the Topeka VA Medical Center."

Dole first took action after receiving a field report prepared by the American Legion in July which alleged inadequacies in staffing and other areas including fire safety. On July 29, Senator Dole sent a letter and the Legion report to Veterans Administrator Harry N. Walters. Dole directed Walters to immediately look into the matter. Mr. Walters responded that a full report would be on Senator Dole's desk within a few weeks. The Veterans Administration then sent an on-site inspection team to Topeka's Colmery-O'Neil. The team agreed that staffing inadequacies exist at Topeka's Colmery-O'Neil VA Hospital.

In early October, an official recommendation was made that Colmery-O'Neil should have an additional 21 nurses on the staff. That request has been pending with the VA Resource Allocations Committee since that time.