

Bob Dole

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

DOLE TESTIFIES BEFORE REFORM PANEL: CALLS FOR COMMITTEE, STAFF & FUNDING CUTS; SIX-MONTH "CITIZEN LEGISLATURE" SESSIONS; PRECIOUS RIGHTS OF MINORITY MUST BE PRESERVED

Washington -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-Kansas) today gave the following testimony before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress:

I am pleased to be asked to testify before this Joint Committee as it sets about on its one year task of suggesting ways to reorganize the Congress.

If there's one thing on which all of us on the hill can agree--Democrats, Republicans, and Bernie Sanders--it's that there is room for improvement in the way Congress conducts the people's business.

One thing for sure is that this committee will not be lacking for suggestions.

Universal term limits for members of Congress should be studied by this committee, as well as use of the franking privilege. I would like a 30-day agenda of Senate floor business from the Majority Leader to be published in the Congressional Record and an agenda of Senate floor business for the upcoming 30 days and every 30 days thereafter while the Senate is in session.

Congressional reform has been a favorite subject of scholars and think tanks, and many of my thoughts on the matter have been influenced by people such as Eric Felten of the Heritage Foundation.

DOLE PROPOSALS: COMMITTEES, STAFF & BUDGET

I have put together a package of proposals which I believe are necessary, and am hopeful that the distinguished Senate Majority Leader and myself can find common ground, and jointly sponsor many proposed reforms.

A series of my proposals are based on my belief that both our budget and our staff have grown beyond what is reasonable.

I feel that there are too many committees in the Senate, and that some of them should be eliminated. For example the committees on aging, small business, and indian affairs could be made into subcommittees of other committees, and therefore eliminated.

I believe that the amount of funds appropriated and available to committees of the Senate for fiscal year 1994 can be cut to 90 percent of the amount appropriated to the committees of the Senate for fiscal year 1993.

(MORE)

The same 90% limitation can also be applied to the Office of Technology Assessment; the Congressional Research Service; and the General Accounting Office.

A reduction in Senate staff could be easily achieved through a cap on committee staff levels.

I also support a limitation on detailees to the Senate. No Senator or Senate committee should accept the services of an individual detailed to such Senator or Senate committee by a federal agency. These only serve to expand the staff of Congress on an unaccountable basis. I hope that the White House would follow our lead here, and that President Clinton will uphold his campaign promise to cut staff by 25%.

SIX-MONTH SESSIONS

Perhaps the most radical of my proposals does not involve cutting our budget, or cutting our staffs--rather in involves cutting the amount of time that Congress meets.

Our Founding Father's vision of a "citizen legislator" where members would be able to serve in Congress, and then return to their communities to live under the laws they have written has given way to year round meetings and hurried week-end plane trips to and from our states and districts.

Therefore, I am proposing that each session of Congress be limited to six months, and that the other half of the year, Congress be in recess.

My package also includes proposals dealing with the limitation of committee assignments, abolition of proxy voting, and the elimination of commemorative bills.

I offer these suggestions as a way of getting started on the difficult path of congressional organization, and I would welcome any questions you might have about them.

THE PRECIOUS RIGHTS OF THE MINORITY

In conclusion, however, I will comment on the rules changes suggested by the Majority Leader.

As the elected leader of the minority, I feel it is my duty to defend minority rights as they exist in the Senate. It is not only the minority party which treasures these rights. Senator Bryan of Nevada used his right to have a conference report read during the last Congress, in his fight to keep a nuclear waste depository out of the state of Nevada.

Minority rights are precious in the Senate, and I would hope that this joint committee would not seek to abridge them in the name of reform.

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