

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, March 11, 1994

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WHITEWATER HEARINGS

REPUBLICANS WANT TO BE FAIR & FLEXIBLE: **HEARINGS ONLY WAY TO PUT WHITEWATER BEHIND US**

Yesterday, I sent a letter to the distinguished Majority Leader expressing my hope--and I believe the hope of most Senate Republicans--that we will be able to find some way to hold public and bipartisan hearings into the so-called Whitewater affair.

On Wednesday, independent counsel Robert Fiske met with my distinguished colleagues, Senators D'Amato and Cohen, to outline his concerns about how public hearings may affect his investigation.

It's certainly understandable that Mr. Fiske would want to protect his own prosecutorial turf. That's his job. But Mr. Fiske must understand that Congress has its own job to do as well.

As Charles Krauthammer pointed out in today's Washington Post, and I quote: "The prosecutor's interest is prosecution. The public interest is disclosure. The prosecutor tries to find breaches of law. The public needs to know about breaches of trust."

So public hearings are not meant to supplant or "second-guess" Mr. Fiske's investigation. On the contrary, hearings are essential if the Senate is to fulfill its own constitutional obligation to oversee executive branch activities. Unlike Mr. Fiske, the Senate has this oversight obligation, an obligation that Mr. Fiske has himself publicly acknowledged.

Opportunity to Remove Ethical Cloud

And needless to say, public hearings offer President Clinton a valuable opportunity to remove the ethical cloud now hanging over the White House.

Of course, Senate Republicans want to cooperate with Mr. Fiske to ensure that hearings do not needlessly interfere with his investigation. And that's why we want to be both fair and flexible when it comes to the timing of the hearings and the way the hearings are structured.

GOP Fair & Flexible: No Immunity -- Give Fiske Breathing Room

First of all, there is a consensus on this side of the aisle, at least, that no witness appearing at a Whitewater hearing should be granted immunity. No immunity. Period. That's what Mr. Fiske requested, and Senate Republicans are willing to accommodate his request. As I said on Wednesday, this should solve the so-called Iran-Contra problem.

Secondly, we are prepared to do whatever we can to prevent the public disclosure of the contents of the RTC criminal referrals concerning Madison Guaranty. Of course, preventing public disclosure will require the cooperation of our Democratic colleagues, as well.

And finally, we are willing to give the independent counsel a little breathing room, perhaps a few weeks, to conduct his separate investigation into the recently-revealed meetings involving White House, Treasury, and RTC officials.

Put Whitewater Behind Us

I have no idea what, if anything, lies at the bottom of Whitewater, nor do I know what the Whitewater hearings may or may not disclose.

But it's becoming increasingly clear, with the daily drip-drip-drip of allegations, that hearings are the only way to put the Whitewater episode behind us so that we can move ahead to the vital issues facing our country.

(more)

And those who oppose hearings should remember this: we would not have known about the White House-Treasury-RTC meetings if Banking Committee Republicans had not used the opportunity of an RTC oversight hearing to ask Whitewater-related questions. In other words: if there had been no hearing, there would have been no disclosure...and no subpoenas.

American People Deserve Full Accounting

In a poll out yesterday, a plurality of the American people want congressional hearings on this matter. The American people deserve a full accounting of Whitewater, and they deserve hearings that are conducted in a fair and bipartisan manner. Senate Republicans are willing to work with our Democrat colleagues to achieve these important goals.

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** Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 4:20 PM ET.