

Bob Dole

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



**NEWS
FROM:**

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HEALTH CARE DEBATE: RURAL HEALTH CARE

DOLE SUPPORTS AMENDMENT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN RURAL AMERICA: DOLE/PACKWOOD PLAN CONTAINS SPECIFIC RURAL HEALTH CARE REFORMS

WASHINGTON - During debate on health care reform legislation, the U.S. Senate today approved 94-4 an amendment supported by Kansas Senator Bob Dole to improve access to rural health care. Senator Dole's remarks follow:

I would like to commend the Senator from South Dakota for bringing such an important issue before the U.S. Senate -- the health care for rural Americans.

On January 21, 1993, I stood in this Chamber and laid out the initiatives I hoped to accomplish during the 103rd Congress.

Rural Health Care Deserves Bipartisan Support

On that day I said that I was not going to introduce a comprehensive health care reform proposal because of my strong belief that responsible health care reform was going to have to be crafted on a bipartisan basis with the support of at least eighty or ninety percent of the Senate.

However, I did say on January 21, 1993 that there was one area of health care reform where we could not afford to delay. And that was health care reform for rural America. So on that day, I introduced a rural health care bill that improved access to health care in rural America. I might add that that bill received wide bipartisan support.

So, while we do have our fair share of disagreements in this Chamber on the issue of health care reform, I am happy to see the groundswell of support to make rural health care better and more accessible.

Rural Americans make up about 20 percent of the population. And, contrary to what some may believe, rural Americans are as diverse a group as Americans living in any other part of the country. That's why when proposing health care reforms, rural Americans are no more likely to adapt to a one-size-fits-all model than are Americans living in any other part of the country.

Dole/Packwood Plan Helps Rural Americans

Senator Packwood and I, along with 38 of our colleagues have incorporated many of these provisions in the "American Option" plan that we introduced on August 9. In that bill, we give special consideration to rural Americans.

As rural Americans know all too well, access to health care providers can be just as much of a challenge in rural America as is cost. That's why in our bill we have special provisions to improve access to health care in rural America.

Many of these provisions are quite technical, but let me just summarize what they would accomplish.

- ◆ **More Primary Care:** The way Medicare reimburses medical education would be changed so that young physicians can be trained in places like community health centers, or other out-patient settings, where more primary care providers are likely to be trained.
- ◆ **Improved reimbursement** for nurse practitioners and other non-physician providers to encourage more of these providers to practice in rural areas.
- ◆ **Better access to rural hospitals** by extending payments for Medicare dependent hospitals through 1998. The Dole-Packwood proposal recognizes that these payments may make the difference between keeping a hospital's doors open or not.

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