

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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CRIME BILL UPDATE

HOUSE RECOMMITS BILL TO CONFERENCE; TINKERING AROUND EDGES WON'T FLY IN SENATE

At today's news conference, I was pleased to hear that President Clinton has convinced himself that "good-faith" negotiations with Republicans may be the ticket out of the crime-bill morass. That's a positive development, but after listening to the President and Mrs. Clinton last weekend railing about "procedural tricks" and other "political gimmicks," I must say they have a very odd view of bipartisanship.

10% Across-Board Cut -- 100% Non-Starter in Senate

At the news conference, the President indicated that he now supports the public notification provisions of the Megan Kanka law. That's a step in the right direction...but the President must understand that his second proposal--a 10% cut across-the-board--is a 100% non-starter here in the Senate. The focus should be on cutting pork, not on cutting prisons or police, as the President seems to have suggested. Any cuts should be from the social-spending account, and they should be in terms of billions, not millions, of dollars.

Tough-On-Crime Proposals

Regrettably, the President also failed to mention some of the tough-on-crime proposals that passed the Senate last year and should be part of any crime-bill compromise: mandatory minimums for those who use a gun in the commission of a crime; mandatory restitution for crime victims; Senator Simpson's proposal requiring the swift deportation of criminal aliens; and the provision ensuring the admissibility of similar-offense evidence in sexual assault cases.

And let's not forget the retroactive repeal of mandatory minimum penalties. As a result of this misguided proposal, as many as 10,000 convicted drug offenders could be eligible for early release.

Yes, there's room for compromise, but the President will have to come our way. That's what bipartisanship is all about. And, in the end, it may require him to do some heavy-lifting within the ranks of his own party.

Administration Silent on Crime Debate

Unfortunately, the administration has stood back silently through most of the crime debate here in Congress. It never had a crime bill...never sent one to Congress...never showed one to me. And, the administration was A.W.O.L. in the debate over the so-called Racial Justice Act. If the administration had early-on staked out a clear-cut position against this flawed proposal, months and months of delay could have been avoided.

Now that the House has recommitted the crime bill to conference, we have a real opportunity to pass the kind of tough, no-nonsense crime-fighting plan the American people deserve. But, as these negotiations begin, the administration should be on notice that a "tinker-around-the-edges" approach just won't fly here in the United States Senate.

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*Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 6:00 PM.