

Bob Dole



**NEWS
FROM:**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CRIME BILL UPDATE

**SENATORS CALL FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO CRIME BILL:
STRIP PORK & RESTORE GET-TOUGH PROVISIONS; PRESIDENT SHOULD
ASK CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO RECONVENE CRIME CONFERENCE**

WASHINGTON -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole and the four Senate Republican members of the crime bill conference committee today sent the following letter to President Clinton urging him to call on the Senate and House Democratic Leadership to immediately reconvene the crime bill conference so that specific improvements to the bill can be made, including stripping pork-barrel spending, and restoring tough-on-crime provisions. The letter was co-signed by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Strom Thurmond (R-SC), Al Simpson (R-WY), and Chuck Grassley (R-IA).

Dear Mr. President:

Congress has an historic opportunity to pass anticrime legislation that can make a real difference in the lives of all Americans.

While the crime conference report now pending before Congress contains a number of worthy provisions, it is unfortunately deficient in several critical areas: It provides too few resources for state prison construction and operation. It fails to promote a real truth-in-sentencing plan for America so that violent criminals are kept behind bars where they belong. It permits the early release of as many as 10,000 federal prisoners as a result of a mandatory minimum "repeal" provision. And it needlessly increases the federal budget deficit.

The conference report also devotes billions and billions of dollars to more than 25 separate "prevention" programs. The American people are not fooled by this multi-billion dollar boondoggle: It is an obvious attempt to placate the most liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which otherwise would not support a bill that establishes an enforceable federal death penalty.

Not only is this pork-barrel spending wasteful, it is also unnecessary, a duplication of existing federal programs. The General Accounting Office, for example, recently reported that there are already seven federal agencies sponsoring 266 prevention programs for delinquent and at-risk youth. The annual price-tag for these programs is \$3 billion. GAO also estimates that the federal government currently runs 154 separate and overlapping federal employment and training programs at an annual cost of nearly \$25 billion. The bottom line is that more pork will not mean more crime prevention.

Mr. President, we want to pass a crime bill, and we want to do so on a bipartisan basis. That's why we urge you to call upon the Senate and House Democratic Leadership to reconvene the conference immediately so that the following improvements to the conference report can be made:

- * Strip the pork-barrel provisions and divert a significant portion of the savings to the Edward Byrne Memorial Grant Program. The Byrne program is designed to assist state and local law enforcement, the very people who are on the front-lines in the war against crime. This is where the resources are needed most.

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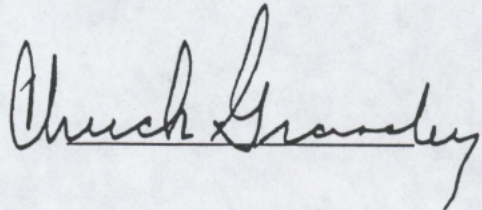
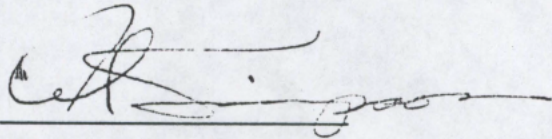
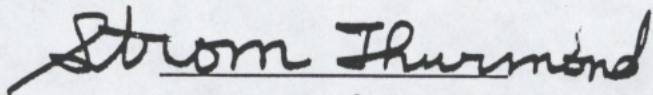
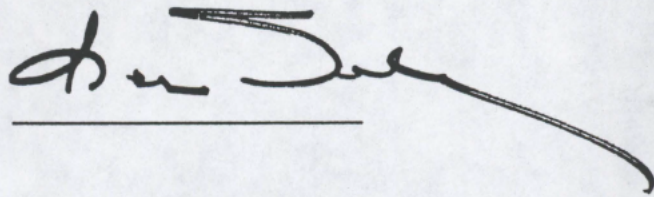
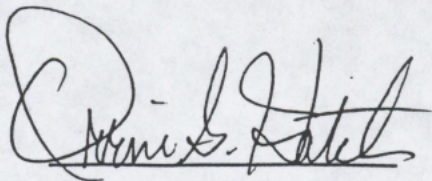
- * Increase funding for state prisons to the \$13.5 billion level passed by the House and make it available only for prison construction and operation. Condition at least half of this funding on the adoption of truth-in-sentencing laws for first-time violent offenders.
- * Narrow the so-called mandatory minimum "safety valve" that the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts estimates could result in the early release of as many as 10,000 federal prisoners.
- * Prohibit the use of statistical tests and racial quotas in the enforcement of our nation's death penalty laws.
- * Restore the mandatory minimum penalties for those who use a gun in the commission of a crime or sell drugs to children.
- * Restore the provision ensuring the admissibility of evidence of similar crimes in sex offense cases. This provision was adopted on a bipartisan basis by both Houses of Congress.
- * Restore the provision requiring mandatory restitution to the victims of violent crime.
- * Restore the deficit-neutral trust fund.

Republicans would prefer making additional improvements to the conference report. However, if the changes we have listed above are adopted, we are prepared to support the conference report as a compromise measure. If the changes are not adopted, we will have no choice but to oppose a bloated, soft-on-crime conference report that we believe would not be in the best interests of the American people.

We would also like to take this opportunity to urge you not to resurrect the so-called Racial Justice Act through an executive order or other Presidential directive. The American people will rightfully view such a directive as nothing more than a back-door attempt to abolish the federal death penalty.

Mr. President, thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



One year ago today I said that Republicans were committed to working with the President and our Democrat colleagues to give America the right dose of reform. I meant it then, and I mean it now. The fact is, however, that from the first day of this debate, the President locked all Republicans out of the process, from the creation of the stealth task force to the introduction of his bill.

I am also disappointed that the President did not respond to a suggestion I made literally hundreds of times over the past year--and that was to pass a reform bill containing the many provisions on which there was bi-partisan agreement. These provisions would have made our system more affordable and more accessible to millions of Americans today. Some Democrats, including the distinguished Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, have suggested similar action.

Unfortunately, at this late date, I now find myself agreeing with the many who have suggested that time--and the public's patience--are too short for us to now embark on this road.

A Lot Went Right in Debate

So, what is the bottom line? Did something go "wrong" with the debate, as the White House insists. Was the past year a waste of time? Did Congress fail the American people?

The bottom line is that instead of wondering what went wrong with this debate, the White House should wake up and realize that a lot went right. Democracy is all about people coming together and making decisions. And in this case, the American people did just that. Their decision may have been exactly opposite from the one the President recommended, but that's a right the American people have in our democracy.

The bottom line is that it was not gridlock that defeated government-run health care, as some would have you believe. It was not some parliamentary trick that Bob Dole had up his sleeve. It was not the pressure tactics of so-called special interests. It was not the persuasiveness of Harry and Louise. Anyone making those suggestions is guilty of political malpractice.

Consensus of American People

What defeated the President's proposal? Plain and simple, it was the overwhelming consensus of people from all parts of our country and from all walks of life. It was the overwhelming consensus of the hard working men and women who raise families, pay taxes, and create jobs. A consensus reached after very careful study of the facts.

And the bottom line is that this year was not a waste of time, and that Congress did not fail the American people.

Indeed, Congress and America know a great deal more about health care on September 22, 1994, than we did on September 22, 1993. We have learned in greater clarity what Americans believe are the strengths and weaknesses of our health care system. We have also watched as countless Americans become involved in the process--writing and calling their Congressman or Senator; attending town hall meetings; and supporting candidates who believe as they do.

Debate Far From Complete

No doubt about it, this debate is far from complete. In fact, the next step will take place on November 8, when Americans go to the polls. Many races will provide the opportunity for Americans to choose between a Republican candidate who opposed the President's plan for government-run health care, and a Democrat candidate who supported it. Again, choosing between two different philosophies is what democracy is all about.

Congress meets every year. So we'll be back next year, and you can bet that health care reform will be on top of the agenda, no matter which party controls Congress. And Americans can count on the fact that Republicans will continue to fight for reform that guarantees the choice and quality Americans have come to expect, and we'll continue to oppose any plan to turn our health care system over to the federal government.

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