



# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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## AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AMERICA WOULD SUFFER UNDER PROPOSED GAS RATIONING PLAN

WASHINGTON -- In a letter to President Carter, 10 senators on the Senate Agriculture Committee, including Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), today warned that farmers and those persons living in rural areas "would suffer unnecessarily" if forced to abide by the current Administration-proposed gasoline rationing plan.

The plan must receive an affirmative vote by both the House and Senate by May 13, 1979, before being enacted. "Before the Senate has to make its decision on the plan, however, we believe the plan should be amended," the senators said. "While some energy officials believe that the chances of the plan being implemented are small, it is our belief that this is not necessarily so and that, once implemented, farmers and rural people would suffer unnecessarily as would the American consumer."

The letter pointed out that the proposed rationing plan does not give agriculture full priority as has been done in the past since World War II with any type of energy conservation or allocation legislation. Although the plan proposes to give farmers supplemental allocations for off-highway vehicles such as tractors and combines to meet food needs, the senators said there were several major weaknesses:

1. Farmers will not be given any priority allocation for their on-highway vehicles, such as trucks, that are predominately used for farm business purposes. Furthermore, no priority is given to agriculture for the distribution of production items for farmers, such as feed, fertilizer and seed. Nor is any priority given to the processing and marketing of the farmers' production.

"Mr. President, as a farmer, you know that the production of food is on a time clock that cannot wait for gasoline coupons to be issued or purchased," they wrote. "Timeliness of fuel, in sufficient amounts, is absolutely essential to full food and fiber production, which is essential to life. Can you imagine the consequences of a farmer not being able to plant or harvest a crop in a timely manner because he did not receive enough gasoline coupons or of bread not being delivered to consumers because no priority was given to bakery delivery fleets?"

2. People living in rural areas have to travel longer distances to go to work, shop for groceries, and to receive adequate medical care. "The plan proposes to allocate gasoline coupons on a registered vehicle basis; thus, rural people would suffer disproportionately since there are no alternatives such as mass transit for most of them. This seems most unfair, and it is a continual reminder to us that for most government actions or regulations proposed in Washington, rural residents are not given an adequate voice in such decisions. Hearings were held in several major cities of this nation on this plan, but not one was held in a rural area.

"It is our understanding that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources raised this issue, and that a member of your staff, Mr. Stuart E. Eizenstat, responded with two letters. Mr. Eizenstat acknowledged that the plan has a serious bias against rural America, and that additional gasoline coupons would be given to rural states in the form of state reserves that could be used to help eliminate this problem. These assurances, however, are not official in the plan. We need more than assurances.

"In sum, Mr. President, we are concerned about the adverse effect of the proposed gasoline rationing plan on agriculture and rural America -- concerns that were initially raised by the Department of Agriculture but essentially ignored by the Department of Energy."