

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE CALLS FOR RE-EXAMINATION OF METRO AREA FORMULA

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kansas) today called on the Department of Commerce to re-examine its method for determining metropolitan statistical areas. The current formula promises to have a detrimental impact on the Wichita Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA).

In his letter to the Secretary of Commerce, Malcolm Baldrige, Dole questioned the Department's definition of a "standard metropolitan statistical area." The recently developed criteria require that an entire county have a minimum number of people per square mile to be included as part of an SMSA.

Dole wrote, "Since 1965, Butler County to the east of Wichita has been part of this SMSA, but under the new rules Butler County would be excluded because it has too few people per square mile. Without Butler County, the Wichita metropolitan area will be significantly smaller and the Commerce Department statistics would produce the illusion of a contracting community with diminished markets and labor force. This inaccurate image would influence industries and businesses to locate elsewhere, because they would not be able to read beneath the changing numbers.

"I urge the Department of Commerce to address this problem and consider a formula which would more accurately reflect population patterns in cities such as Wichita and large counties such as Butler. Butler County has grown along with neighboring Wichita, but the populated portion of the county which forms the eastern part of the Wichita metropolitan area is only a small segment of the otherwise rural county, the largest in Kansas. Regardless of the solution, it is inaccurate and misleading to exclude the populated communities contingent to Wichita from the SMSA."