

*Bob Dole*



**NEWS**

**U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS**

**FROM:**

**SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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## PROTECTING HEALTH WORKERS

### DOLE/MITCHELL AMENDMENT AIMS FOR WORKPLACE GUIDELINES TO PROTECT HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS FROM AIDS & OTHER BLOODBORNE DISEASES

IN JULY, THIS BODY TOOK AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE PROTECTION OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC BY PASSING LEGISLATION REQUIRING STATES TO IMPLEMENT THE NEWLY-ISSUED CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS WHO ARE INFECTED WITH THE HIV VIRUS.

TODAY, WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROTECT MORE AMERICANS. IN MAY 1989, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROPOSED A MAJOR NEW SET OF REGULATIONS TO PROTECT AN ESTIMATED 5.3 MILLION WORKERS -- 4.7 MILLION IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES -- AGAINST THE AIDS AND HEPATITIS B VIRUSES AND OTHER BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS.

THESE REGULATIONS COVER THE WATERFRONT, REQUIRING EMPLOYERS TO IDENTIFY JOBS INVOLVING ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL EXPOSURE, AND TO IMPLEMENT AN INFECTION-CONTROL PLAN FOR THOSE WORKERS WHOSE DUTIES PUT THEM AT RISK.

SINCE THE PROPOSAL WAS MADE, OVER 3,000 COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC -- A RECORD FOR ANY PROPOSED RULEMAKING. THE AMOUNT OF COMMENTS, AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE REGULATIONS -- WITH OVER 600 PAGES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL ALONE -- HAVE UNDERSTANDABLY RESULTED IN DELAYING THEIR FINAL IMPLEMENTATION.

HOWEVER, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC CAN WAIT NO LONGER. WITH THE SUPPORT OF LABOR SECRETARY MARTIN, SENATORS MITCHELL, KENNEDY, HATCH, PACKWOOD, HATFIELD, AND MOYNIHAN HAVE JOINED ME IN THE OFFERING OF THIS AMENDMENT.

IF ADOPTED, THIS AMENDMENT WILL REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF LABOR TO ISSUE FINAL RULES AND REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE STANDARD ON OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 1991. IF THIS DEADLINE IS NOT MET, THE REGULATIONS AS PROPOSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR IN MAY OF 1989, WILL TAKE EFFECT, PENDING THE ISSUANCE OF FINAL REGULATIONS.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT, ONCE IMPLEMENTED, THESE REGULATIONS WILL REDUCE THE NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURES TO THE HEPATITIS B VIRUS, THE AIDS VIRUS, AND OTHER BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS. AND THERE SHOULD ALSO BE NO DOUBT THAT THE SOONER THESE REGULATIONS TAKE EFFECT, THE BETTER.

WE DON'T PRETEND THAT THE CDC GUIDELINES, ALONG WITH THESE REGULATIONS, WILL PROVIDE 100% PROTECTION. NO DOUBT, GLOVES LEAK, NEEDLES ARE DROPPED, FINGERS ARE UNEXPECTEDLY CUT -- BUT THE FACT THAT WE CAN'T GIVE A TOTAL GUARANTEE IN NO WAY DIMINISHES THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF THESE EFFORTS. THIS IS SIMPLY ONE MORE EFFORT ON OUR PART.

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