

Bob Dole

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS



NEWS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, May 26, 1995

Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

WELFARE REFORM

DOLE HERALDS COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF WELFARE OVERHAUL

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, today issued the following statement regarding the Committee's approval of welfare reform legislation:

For the second time in as many days, the Republican majority has demonstrated what a difference elections can make. Yesterday, we passed a historic plan to balance the nation's budget by 2002. And today, the Senate Finance Committee approved and sent to the floor what I believe could be the basis for landmark legislation to dramatically overhaul our nation's welfare system.

Our guiding principle must be to do what we can to break the cycle of dependency that traps so many Americans in the welfare system. Our welfare system must work for the people it serves -- Americans in need, and, most especially, children in need. The system can be tough on work, and kind to kids. The point is not to punish people, it is to give them the help they need to get everyone off welfare and into the mainstream. After all, welfare was designed to be and should be a temporary, transitional program, not a government-sponsored way of life. And I still believe most people want a hand-up, not a hand-out.

Almost everyone agrees, our current system just isn't working. In a nation where 30% of all births are out of wedlock, reforming our welfare system is a major challenge requiring creative solutions, new ideas, and big changes.

To accomplish our goals, we must put an end to the one-size-fits-all approach from Washington. That's why the reform plan approved today by the Finance Committee returns flexibility and decision-making power to the states. That's the same approach I proposed in 1979, when then Finance Committee Chairman Russell Long and I introduced legislation to convert the open-ended matching of state family welfare costs to a fixed block grant system. That idea had bipartisan backing in 1979, and I remain hopeful that this approach will enjoy broad bipartisan support in 1995. States are closer to the people, and are our government's laboratories of innovation. So it's no surprise that many states have already been successful where the federal government has failed in improving their flawed welfare systems.

For welfare to work, the system should require work. And I'm pleased that this plan emphasizes private sector jobs as the best way to break free of welfare dependency and poverty. An over-reliance on publicly sponsored, make-work jobs will lead to more cost, more bureaucracy, and more dependency on the government.

I am also pleased that the Committee adopted my amendment that will provide us with information on one of the root causes of the welfare problem -- the level of out of wedlock births.

Like any complex piece of legislation, this one is surely not perfect. I look forward to continuing to work with the nation's Governors, and I look forward to constructive debate in the Senate.

###