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Dole: Food stamp regulation won't last

By Ray Hemman
The Hutchinson News

Sen. Bob Dole told a dozen officials from Kansas convenience store companies that they had little to fear about a regulation that could affect their ability to accept food stamps.

The Kansas Republican said the industry's concerns would be dealt with once a "Beltway snafu" gets worked out. The group — members of the National Association of Convenience Stores — met with Dole in a private meeting Monday at Wells Aircraft in Hutchinson.

Earlier this year, a bill sailed through the House that would change the Department of Agriculture regulation. The regulation in question could cause the convenience store industry to lose 28,000 food stamp licenses nationwide, said Gary Pfannenstiel, vice president of the Hutchinson-based Kwik Shop. Kwik Shop would lose slightly more than 100 licenses. Nationwide, there are



Dole

about 70,000 convenience stores.

Without the legislation, a regulation that will go into effect in March creates a new formula that requires 50 percent or more of eligible food stamp food sales to come from "staple foods." The convenience stores get caught in a jam because coffee, carbonated and uncarbonated drinks and candy are "eligible" food stamp foods but not considered staple foods. These food-stamp eligible foods that are not staples often make up a large percentage of many convenience stores' food

sales, store owners said.

"That 50 percent is hard to reach," Pfannenstiel said.

The House bill is being held up in the Senate because of amendments unrelated to the food stamp issue, Dole said.

The new bill would base food stamp retailer eligibility on a store's selling food in four broad areas — dairy, bread/cereal, meat, and fruits/vegetables. At least two of the areas would have to be represented by perishable foods, such as bread or milk, Pfannenstiel said.

Dole said he thinks that once the parliamentary problem is resolved in the Senate, the House bill will advance.

"They (convenience store industry officials) say they can prove they are competitive," Dole said. "In some isolated areas, poor people would not be able to use food stamps (without the bill). We do want to avoid the use of food stamps in doughnut shops and ice cream stands."

Pfannenstiel said surveys had been done comparing the pricing of food of convenience stores and traditional grocery stores. The price of staple foods was only slightly higher in the convenience stores. In some areas with small grocery stores, the convenience stores sometimes had lower prices.

In many small communities, a convenience store may be the only grocery store available, Pfannenstiel said, adding that if the ability to buy at that store were lost, the poor would have to drive longer distances to purchase food with the stamps. In addition, on certain holidays, such as Christmas, a convenience store is the only one open in a community, he said.

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With an eye on '96 election Dole forges a GOP coalition

By Carolyn Barta
Dallas Morning News

Senate Republican leader Bob Dole is showing signs of heeding key lessons of 1992. Even so, however, he is walking a tightrope to balance his present role as Senate minority leader with his ultimate goal of running for president in 1996.

In last year's election, Americans said they wanted to eliminate legislative gridlock. They wanted to get governmental spending under control, and they wanted to reduce the deficit. They wanted politicians to focus as much on governing as on campaigning. For the Republicans, the opposition party, that means not just railing against the Democrats, not just operating according to the philosophy that if you do nothing, you do no harm; it means working on a pro-active program.

On such a stage, Dole — the 1976 vice presidential "hatchet man" for Gerald Ford and the '88 presidential primary candidate who testily admonished George Bush to "stop lying about my record" — must try to fashion a minority governing coalition without: (1) putting off his own party's right wing, and (2) getting so close to President Clinton that he harms his own presidential aspirations, and (3) returning to the nasty partisanship of days past that fostered legislative gridlock.

His challenge when Congress reconvenes is both spending cuts and health care. Earlier this year, Dole was in Dallas touting a spending cut plan crafted by 10 Republican senators, including Texas' Kay Bailey Hutchison, which would save \$50 billion over five years, with all the savings going toward deficit reduction.

The plan was inspired by some of the findings of the Grace Commission, which conducted a comprehensive review of government spending in the 1980s, and includes some of the recommendations of Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review. The plan incorporates a balanced-budget amendment and line-item veto into a package that looks for governmental efficiencies and accountability as well as spending cuts.

He'll also be trying to marshal Republican support behind a single health care plan. "There are only 44 of us, so if we're going to be players in health care, we're going to have to come together, 40 or so of us, on one bill," he said.

That will be a test, even for as shrewd a tactician as Bob Dole. If he goes too far to the right into the conservative camp, he ensures business as usual with Republicans remaining in an adversarial position. If he embraces a more moderate health care plan, he stands the chance of angering conservatives and getting too close to President Clinton for his own presidential fortunes, but assures the American people that Republicans can govern.

His hope now is that a new market-oriented, non-employer mandate compromise will emerge in March or April that he can put his arms around. He knows Republicans can't just "sit back and carp" at President Clinton and Democratic health care proposals. The issue has been brought to the table, and 70 percent of Americans, according to polls, feel Democrats are better equipped to deal with the issue.

Republicans have to get a piece of the action because health care will be a defining issue for the 1994 congressional elections. Democrats have controlled the House for 40 years and the Senate for 34 of the last 40 years.



Randy Jones

To take control of the Senate, the GOP needs a net gain of seven seats, not an impossible task given the current anti-incumbent sentiment and history of gains made by the party out of power in off-year elections.

But the GOP needs to pull back into its fold that chunk of the Reagan coalition that fled to Ross Perot in 1992. As Dole said: "We can't afford to let 70 percent of his (Perot's) support be 'leaning Republicans.'"

So, Republicans are going to have to show they can address such issues as health care and spending cuts in ways that affect people's lives, and be effective on such governmental reforms as a balanced-budget amendment and line-item veto. Indeed, they must show they are mainstream conservatives and not right-wing extremists who only want to vote "no."

"People want us, in addition to opposing Clinton, which is the role of the loyal opposition, they want us to understand their problems whether it's health care or unemployment or trying to get jobs and they want us to have alternatives," Dole said.

"They want us to have a program," he said, on such fundamental issues as health care, the budget, immigration and welfare reform.

Bob Dole is currently showing up in polls as a leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1996. Notwithstanding his effectiveness as the Senate minority leader and his high-profile position now, it's unlikely there will be another president elected from the World War II generation. But that doesn't keep the idea from being on his mind, even as he tries to fashion a Republican governing coalition.

Carolyn Barta is op-ed editor for the Dallas Morning News.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

By Sen. Robert Dole

One man's experience proves that the most common cancer among men can be detected early and treated successfully.

BEING told "You have cancer" can be a very frightening experience. The so-called "C" word is one of the most dreaded words in the English language. But when it comes to cancer of the prostate, that fear can be tempered by the knowledge that your problem can be detected early, greatly increasing your chances for successful treatment.

That's what happened to me about a year ago when I was told I had prostate cancer. That was the bad news. The good news was that my doctor had detected it very early through a series of blood tests known as PSA, or prostate specific antigen, followed by a biopsy. After reviewing my treatment options, which ranged from radiation to surgery, I selected surgery.

The operation in December 1991 was successful—my prostate gland was removed. Tests showed that the cancer had not spread, and while many patients do suffer side effects including incontinence, I have enjoyed a virtually trouble-free recovery. Within two weeks, I was back at work, and four months later, I was back to my regular schedule that often entails 15-hour work days.

But my purpose for writing this article is not to talk about Bob Dole—I am writing to pass along information that could well save your life, or the life of a loved one.

Since the day my cancer was diagnosed, I have learned far more about prostate problems than I ever imagined I would—or ever wanted to. I was like most men, barely aware I even had a prostate, much less aware it could develop into a life-threatening problem.

Because of his recent personal experience, Sen. Robert Dole of Kansas has become an active spokesman for the prevention of cancer.



SEN. ROBERT DOLE
"Sharing my experience with others is a small price to pay to save lives."

Perhaps the most stunning fact I learned is that prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer among men. It used to be said that you may die with prostate cancer, but not of it.

Yet, consider these facts: About 34,000 men die every year of the disease, making it the second leading cancer killer of men, exceeded only by lung cancer. That's a figure bigger than the number of people who die every year of AIDS, and is comparable to the number of women who die each year of breast cancer.

Statistically, prostate cancer will afflict one out of every 11 American

males, and one out of every three men over the age of 50.

While I am not trying to pit one disease against another, I was surprised to learn that the federal government devotes just \$28 million per year to prostate cancer research, compared to the billions of dollars earmarked for research into other diseases. That's why Sens. Ted Stevens, Jesse Helms, Alan Cranston and I joined together to boost the annual federal commitment to \$120 million to research this insidious killer.

But without a doubt, the most important fact I learned is the value of early detection. With recent advances in diagnostic and treatment techniques and technology, early detection—and successful treatment—are becoming more and more common. Prostate problems can be detected with the standard digital rectal exam, with ultrasound testing, with the PSA blood test, or with a combination of these tests.

No test is 100 percent reliable, but one thing is for certain—your chances of successful treatment are greatly increased when the problem is detected early. But don't take my word for it, take it from your doctor.

First Lady Betty Ford was a courageous pioneer in raising America's awareness of breast cancer. Now it's time to get the word out on prostate cancer. As uncomfortable as it may be, sharing my experience with others is a small price to pay, knowing that it may save lives.

Throughout my recovery, I spoke personally about prostate cancer with hundreds of men from all walks of life—world leaders, corporate executives, but mostly middle-aged men from middle America. Their biggest fear is that of the unknown.

That's why my message to my friends in The American Legion is simple—please get routine check-ups, and don't neglect to have your doctor check for prostate disease.

It could take the fear out of the words "you have prostate cancer"—even more, it could save your life. □