

Split GOP says health plan's dead

Senators gather to talk options

By The Associated Press
ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Republican senators asserted Friday the Clinton health plan is dead, but they fell short of closing the divide within their own ranks over how to solve the health system's problems.



“We’re halfway home,” said Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole after an overnight retreat that drew 36 GOP senators, key House members and three governors to an old inn across from the Maryland state capitol.

The senators said beforehand they would not try to draft a new, consensus bill. Instead, they spent four hours talking among themselves after listening to outside experts including the heads of the American Medical Association and the Health Insurance Association of America.

Sen. John Chafee of Rhode Island, who would achieve the Clinton goal of universal coverage by requiring all Americans to buy insurance by the year 2005, said, “Obviously everybody wasn’t in total agreement on every detail.” But they had more in common than they previously realized, said Chafee.

It wasn’t all health policy work. Dole spent part of the morning giving television interviews about the latest wrinkles in President Clinton’s Whitewater legal troubles.

And the health retreat ended with the surprise news from Washington that Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell of Maine was retiring. The Republicans praised him — and



Gov. Carroll Campbell (from left) and Sens. Bob Dole and John Chafee share a laugh at the GOP retreat.

added that it boosts their chances of winning back control of the Senate in November.

Chafee acknowledged the pressure he is under to scale back his plan, which would make workers pay income taxes on some of their health benefits.

There is “no question as the Clinton plan falls apart, as apparently is occurring, that the sentiment drifts further to the right,” said Chafee.

Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, who is

championing a conservative, market-based approach to health reform including tax-free medical savings accounts, said, “We all recognize the president’s health care plan is dead because the American people have rejected it.”

Gramm said many Americans “believe we have a crisis — but they don’t believe turning the problem over to the government is going to solve it.”

Dole said “we’re much closer to

gether” and suggested a compromise be crafted along the bipartisan lines that the National Governors Association adopted a month ago.

The governors, led by Gov. Carroll Campbell of South Carolina, refused to endorse Clinton’s proposal to force employers to pay for health insurance. Instead, they called on Congress and the White House to adopt a series of more modest reforms to help people buy and keep health insurance.

Kassebaum, Dole on opposite sides of balanced-budget vote

By Tom Webb

Eagle Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — It’s “he said/she said” time again for the two U.S. senators from Kansas. Sen. Bob Dole thinks a balanced-budget amendment is a grand idea. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum thinks it’s a “sham.”

Today, the two Kansas Republicans will join the full Senate in deciding whether to amend the Constitution and require the federal budget to be balanced. As in previous years, the amendment divides Dole and Kassebaum.

He says that the amendment will reign in a spendthrift Congress. That the federal government needs the discipline. That Americans demand it.

She says, “This amendment is a license to spend. It does not call for a balanced budget until at least 2001. The promise it makes today is that tough choices must be made — tomorrow. And we know from experience that in the world of the federal budget, tomorrow never comes.”

Today’s Senate vote is expected to be close, although Kassebaum’s side is reported to have the upper hand. Passing any constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds vote of both the Senate and the House, plus ratification by 38 states.

A balanced-budget amendment has failed to pass Congress for more than two decades. And while the debt has soared (albeit at varying rates) under Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and now Clinton,



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ton, the debate is largely unchanged. Would it finally brake government spending or just install an empty gesture into the U.S. Constitution?

The text of the amendment says that Congress can’t spend more money than it collects. Unless ...

Unless 60 percent of Congress votes to overspend.

Unless the United States is at war. And unless it’s after the year 2000, maybe later.

Said Kassebaum, “If and when the federal budget is ever again balanced, it will not be because of constitutional prohibitions against deficits. It will be because the public — and the Congress, which reacts to public opinion — stops believing in the free lunch.”

As long as Congress listens to the majority of Americans who oppose

new taxes, cuts in Social Security, cutting Pentagon spending or cutting health care, the federal budget won’t be balanced, she said.

Last week the White House issued an ominous and much-criticized state-by-state breakdown of what a balanced-budget amendment might mean. The least painless option may be large tax increases (\$676 is projected per Kansan each year) and \$1 billion in cuts in Kansas, mostly to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and defense. If there is no tax increase, the cuts would be even more severe.

The House is also scheduled to vote on the balanced-budget amendment this week. Wichita Democrat Rep. Dan Glickman plans to vote for the amendment. Rep. Pat Roberts, a Dodge City Republican, and Rep. Jan Meyers, an Overland Park Republican, are also longtime supporters. The lone Kansas House member opposed is Rep. Jim Slattery, a Topeka Democrat.

In the Senate on Monday, supporters of the amendment, led by Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., acknowledged they were at least four votes short of the 67 required.

An alternative amendment sponsored by Sen. Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat, has been called so weak as to provide little more than political cover for lawmakers afraid to simply vote against the Simon amendment for fear of being portrayed as spendthrifts.

Contributing Los Angeles Times/Washington Post Service

Dole: Defense budget cuts run too deep

By Ray Hemman

The Hutchinson News

While he wasn’t ready to call out the cavalry yet, Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., said Kansas should closely monitor the military base closing process.

The 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, located near Junction City in northeast Kansas, was identified in The Army Times last month as one of two prime candidates for elimination. The publication is not affiliated with the U.S. Army.

Dole, speaking Friday during a telephone press conference with Kansas media, said defense budget cuts have the potential to threaten the historic base. Recently, Dole and Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., met with Army Chief of Staff Gordon Sullivan.

“He has been at Fort Riley and also at Fort Leavenworth, so he knows the territory pretty well,”



Dole

Dole said. “No doubt about it, he said it was a matter of money. He wasn’t going to get political about it. We’ve cut defense budgets so much. You cut from 12 to 10 divisions, it puts on a lot of pressure. No decisions have been made on Fort Riley or any other division. No recommendation will be made until later this summer or fall, and then they submit these recommendations to the secretary of defense and then to the president.”

President Bill Clinton, in turn, will submit his list of bases to be closed or modified to the Base Closing Commission. The commission can add to or subtract from Clinton’s list. The entire process will not be completed until fall 1995, Dole said.

“I don’t think there is any reason to panic, but I think that all of us need to work together to make certain that we understand that defense is being cut. We think it is being cut too much.”

The other division identified as a prime candidate for elimination was the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colo.

Fort Riley had an economic impact of \$654 million on Kansas during 1992, with an operating budget that year of more than \$700 million.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was talk of expanding Fort Riley, which drew intense landowner opposition in north central Kansas.

The base occupies 101,000 acres (nearly 158 square miles) in Riley and Geary counties. Included in that land is 65,000 acres (nearly 102 square miles) for maneuvers.

The Army maintained, during efforts to expand the base, that it needed more land to train with modern weapons. Later, a moratorium on new land acquisitions was announced, and the Army subsequently announced that when the moratorium was lifted, there were no plans to acquire additional land.

Also during the press conference, Dole said that if a congressional investigation of the Whitewater affair is political on the part of the Republicans, the Democrats were guilty of the same thing many times between

1981 and 1993.

“The issue is whether people have the right to know,” Dole said. “Sixty-one percent of the people in a poll I read think that something’s being hidden. That number’s going to rise unless Congress does what Congress ought to do, what Congress has always done in the past. It is not enough for the Democrats to cry politics. If that’s the case, they were guilty of politics 20 times in the past 12 years under President Reagan and President Bush and the people who worked for President Reagan and President Bush.”

“What ought to happen is that Roger Altman ought to be placed on administrative, unpaid leave. He’s No. 2 at Treasury. Webster Hubbell, who is No. 3 at Justice, ought to be on unpaid, administrative leave. Those people ought to be out of the picture. They are up to their ears in misstatements and deception. So they ought to be removed from the scene.”

Dole also said that Russian President Boris Yeltsin made a mistake when he refused to meet

recently with former President Richard Nixon. Yeltsin’s refusal to see the former president because Nixon met with opposition leaders was “pretty petty.”

Nixon had been a leader in talking with congressional leaders about the need to support aid to Russia.

“I think Yeltsin is the one hope we have in Russia, at least right now, but it’s pretty slim,” Dole said. “I think it will be a hard time getting more aid for the Russian Republic ... since the spying incident. We haven’t even spent the money we have appropriated.”

“I think everyone knows we couldn’t appropriate enough money to bail out the Russian Republic. The American people are very skeptical about big aid packages,” he said. “I do believe we have to continue to try to help where we can — American products, American technology, American investment. But American dollars from the federal treasury aren’t going to be the answer.”

Dole: Whitewater could consume White House

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Whitewater shadow cast on the White House could damage President Clinton’s initiatives in Congress and may distract from the health reform debate, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole said Friday.

Dole, R-Kan., said in a speech to newspaper publishers that the daily drumbeat on Whitewater would abate if Democratic leaders heeded GOP calls for congressional hearings into the Arkansas land venture.

“I think it’ll take some of the heat away from the president, get it up in the Congress,”



Dole

Dole told the National Newspaper Association.

“If we let it drag on, it will become a factor. If Congress gets so distracted, the White House gets so distracted, we may lose the focus we need on health care, on crime, on welfare reform, on budget issues. That’s what happened in Watergate.”

Even as he warned about the possibility Whitewater could consume the White House, Dole added fuel to the fire Friday by invoking the memory of Watergate and calling on Clinton to order two high-ranking administration officials placed on leave.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, responding to Dole in a floor speech Friday, said the GOP is simply out to “embarrass the president” through public congressional

hearings and to divert attention from the lack of a Republican program on many issues.

“They don’t have time for economic growth and job creation because all they want to talk about is Whitewater,” the Maine Democrat said.

“We have a lot to do. That’s what we should be focusing our attention on, the real needs of the American people.”

Mitchell said there eventually would be congressional hearings on Whitewater but not until it was clear they would not undermine the investigation of independent counsel Robert Fiske, who opposes such hearings now.

In an interview with Kansas reporters, Dole said Clinton should order unpaid leave for Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman

and Associate Attorney General Webster Hubbell because of misleading statements about Whitewater.

“These people ought to be out of the picture,” Dole said. “They’re up to their ears in misstatements and deception.”

Altman, who is also interim head of the Resolution Trust Corp. that oversees the cleanup of failed savings and loans, is a central Whitewater figure because of revelations that Treasury Department officials briefed the White House about the status of RTC investigations into an Arkansas thrift with ties to the Clintons.

Hubbell worked with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock, Ark., which represented Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan.

Lawmakers rack up frequent flier mileage

WASHINGTON (AP) — For frequent political fliers like Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, finding a plane ride is as easy as calling the nearest friendly corporation.

Instead of relying on the fickle schedules of commercial airlines and suffering through sometimes long airport layovers, Dole and other top-ranking politicians can summon corporate airplanes to ferry them anywhere they want to go.

Last year, the Kansas Republican spent at least \$117,352 on corporate flights to all corners of the country, according to Federal Election Commission records.

Another congressional leader, House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, D-Missouri, spent \$15,622 on corporate frequent flying in 1993, the records show.

Jo-Anne Coe, executive director of Dole’s political action committee, Campaign America, said she has a Rolodex filled with companies willing to provide transportation — and perhaps allow their lobbyists or executives to rub elbows with the senator.



Sen. Bob Dole

“Some of them do like to put a company staff person on there,” she said. “It’s usually one of the Washington reps.”

Coe said Dole often flies commercial. But during his trips to 39 states in 1993, the potential 1996 presidential candidate sometimes visited isolated places or airports requiring tricky connecting flights.

“It’s a necessity. It’s not just a convenience,” she said. “Because he is in such demand, he’ll cover three or four states in one day. The only way you can do that is to have a private airplane.”

Federal law requires politicians to reimburse the companies for the equivalent of first-class air fare if there’s scheduled service to the destination on commercial flights. If there’s no scheduled service, politicians must pay going charter rates for corporate planes.

Dole, who’s regularly invited to speak at GOP candidates’ fundraisers from coast to coast, often makes the cost of the corporate jet flight an “in-kind” contribution from Campaign America to the candidate. He also flies to political party shindigs on corporate aircraft.

“It may sound self-serving, but it really is to benefit the folks he

is coming in to help,” Coe said. “If we didn’t do that, he couldn’t get to all these events.”

FEC records show Dole rode most often on aircraft provided by agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland Inc. The senator’s PAC paid ADM more than \$23,000 in 1993. ADM officials didn’t return telephone calls to discuss the flights.

Other corporate fliers Dole frequented were Federal Express Corp., which provided \$18,300 in travel; U.S. Tobacco Co., \$12,500; NTC Group, a New York investment firm, \$13,206; Coastal Corp. of Houston, \$9,788; and ConAgra Inc., \$6,423.

Gephardt logged far fewer miles than Dole on the corporate airplanes in 1993, but they still came in handy.

Gephardt’s Effective Government Committee PAC paid his way to attend fund-raisers for a number of House members. For example, the AFLAC insurance company of Columbus, Ga., was reimbursed \$2,928 last October for flying Gephardt to events for Georgia Rep. Cynthia McKinney and Sanford Bishop.

Other corporations that provided planes for Gephardt last year were defense contractor Raytheon Corp., Shell Oil Co. and Archer Daniels Midland.

Joyce Aboussie, Gephardt’s top political adviser, said the congressman usually flies commercial but — like Dole — sometimes uses corporate planes for remote locales or to avoid long layovers.

“We use it as a last-ditch effort,” Aboussie said.

For instance, Gephardt attended a November fund-raiser in Omaha for Nebraska Democratic Rep. Peter Hoagland. ADM provided the plane at a cost of \$620 to the Effective Government Committee.

Hoagland spokeswoman Kathleen Ambrose said the private plane was the only way Gephardt could make the event on time from Washington. Gephardt would have been forced to take connecting flights if he’d gone commercial, she said.

“There wasn’t any alternative,” she said. “We would love to have a direct flight to Omaha from Washington.”

Bob Dole: the prized trophy on Liddy’s shelf

“Trophy Husbands” is the cover story in Working Woman’s April issue, and yes, that includes Bob Dole. The Senate minority leader and his wife, Elizabeth Dole, are pictured on the cover with three other power couples, Ted Turner and Jane Fonda, Diane Sawyer and Mike Nichols, and Richard Gere and Cindy Crawford. “No matter how successful a woman is in her profession, he is at least her equal, and maybe her better,” the magazine says. “He has three or more of the five attributes that tend to accompany achievement: fame, prestige, power, brains and money. No matter how rich she’s become, his net worth is just as big or a little bigger. . . . If she’s been on the cover of People, he’s made the cover of Time. If she’s been honored by the ACLU, the NAACP, NOW, PEN and MADD, he is on a first-name basis with the household staff of the Lincoln Bedroom at the White House.” The Kansas Republican



Dole

scores big points for brains and star power (four stars each — well, lips, actually), with two for bank account, 1½ for “husbandry,” and one for beauty. (What, no points for caustic wit?) By way of comparison, Ted Turner gets four stars for money and star power, three each for brains and beauty and two in the husband department.