

Dole to form panel to study potential run for presidency

By Steve Kraske and Jake Thompson
Kansas City Star
KANSAS CITY, Mo. — U.S. Sen. Bob Dole will form a presidential exploratory committee next month, a key step in a possible run for the office, an adviser to the senator said this week.

The committee will enable Dole, the incoming Senate majority leader, to start raising money a year before the Republican primary season, and to test the waters for an actual campaign.

The 71-year-old Kansas Republican has not said whether he will run and has indicated he will decide by spring.

But Tom Synhorst, an adviser

Coffeyville native new Senate postmaster

The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas has chosen Coffeyville, Kan., native Janet L. Dorsey as postmaster of the U.S. Senate.

Dorsey, who had been deputy Senate postmaster since 1989, will take over an operation that handled 51 million pieces of mail in 1993, including mail from constituents.

"I can only tell you what I think," said Synhorst, who ran Dole's winning campaign in the Iowa Republican primary in 1988. "And I think the odds are 95 percent or better that he's running."

He described the committee's formation as another "step that has to be taken if you're going to be in the hunt."

Dole could not be reached for comment, but on Tuesday he told the Boston Herald that he was close to making a final decision about 1996.

"The next logical step for us is to have an exploratory committee, which doesn't commit you but it

who works in Mission, said a bid is almost certain.

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gets you in the position where you start raising money," he told the newspaper.

The senator was in Boston to be with his wife, Elizabeth, who underwent surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital to clear a blockage in an artery of her neck. During his stay in Boston, he met with Massachusetts Gov. William Weld, another possible presidential contender.

Others close to the senator confirmed Wednesday that steps were being taken to form the exploratory committee.

Longtime confidant Jo-Anne Coe, who heads Campaign America, Dole's political action committee, said she was getting paperwork together.

While Coe doesn't think Dole has made a final commitment to the committee, she said, "I think he's very close to it."

"Once the exploratory committee is put together the focus will be on raising money," Coe said. "There are no plans to bring on a heavy political staff and all that goes along with that."

Dole's interest in it. Some have questioned whether Dole could handle the post and a presidential campaign at the same time.

Dole, however, has repeatedly asserted that he could, saying President Clinton is expected to

seek re-election while running the country.

Coe and Synhorst identified a group of Dole loyalists — key players in his failed 1988 presidential bid — who would be involved in his presidential exploratory committee.

They include Bill Lacy, the campaign's national director; Mari Maseng Will, the campaign communications director; Coe and Synhorst.

Also involved would be Jim Murphy, a political consultant to Campaign America.

Asked if she plans to join a Dole-for-president campaign, Will said Wednesday, "I will always be a friend and an adviser to the senator, but I think we ought to wait for him to take a few more steps."

If Dole launches a presidential campaign, Coe said, the loyalists will be joined by "some new blood."

Synhorst was more definite about the committee's expected formation.

"He has authorized this group to move ahead and form an exploratory committee sometime next month," Synhorst said about Dole.

The senator does not expect trouble raising money. Numerous donors already have contacted Coe in recent months, she said.

Last month, Texas Republican Sen. Phil Gramm, a Dole rival, became the first likely 1996 contender to set up a presidential exploratory committee. Gramm has said Republican presidential contenders will need at least \$20 million to be competitive.

A poll of 1,001 adults conducted Dec. 10-13 for NBC and The Wall Street Journal rated Dole as the choice of most Republicans for the nomination.

Thirty-two percent of the respondents picked Dole. Former Vice President Dan Quayle was the choice of 17 percent.

Dole tells C-Span he's willing to open Senate to more TV

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress should be opened to greater television coverage, possibly with cameras operated by news organizations, incoming Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole says.

"I want to do what I can to increase public access to Congress," the Kansas Republican said in a letter Tuesday to Brian Lamb, head of the C-Span public affairs cable channel. "Improvements can clearly be made."

Last month, Lamb asked Dole and incoming House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., to improve TV access to floor proceedings and committee hearings. C-Span now televises the floor action live.

Lamb said Tuesday that both GOP leaders replied positively, but a major outstanding issue is whether news organizations can gain control of cameras that cover the House and Senate chambers.

"The big, big question is whether they will allow outsiders to control those cameras so we get a true journalistic view of the proceedings," Lamb said.

Dole said he would look into formation of a "bipartisan Senate working group" to examine that question, which he called "worthy of serious consideration."

The cameras now are operated by congressional employees and the feed is provided to C-Span and others. The focus is almost always on the person speaking, with no reaction shots or views of the rest of the chamber.

Dole said he would suggest that the Senate Rules Committee consult with C-Span and network news officials to "consider appropriate changes to the procedures determining camera coverage of floor activity, with an eye towards making the coverage as complete as possible."

A similar House task force is being

formed to examine whether outsiders should control the cameras.

Lamb also asked Gingrich and Dole to allow cameras into House-Senate conference committees, where compromises are reached on major legislation. Dole said he supports the idea and would look into a joint resolution that would allow it.

Dole aids disabled concerns

His foundation provides grants

By The Associated Press
The impression most people have of Sen. Bob Dole is that of a gruff-talking tough guy, scourge of Democrats in general and President Clinton in particular.

The incoming Senate majority leader rarely reveals the gentler side — the one that began a foundation for disabled people, the one that can't forget how people in his Kansas hometown raised money for an operation to repair his serious war wounds.

"I remember after World War II when the people of Russell, Kan., passed around cigar boxes," Dole said. "I remember what happened because somebody helped me. That was the beginning of the foundation."

Ten years ago, the Kansas Republican started the Dole Foundation for Employment of People with Disabilities. Since then, it has awarded 300 grants for disability projects worth \$6.2 million and hopes to raise another \$10 million during the next two years from private sources.

Many of those sources are major political contributors such as Archer Daniels Midland Co., ConAgra Inc. and Anheuser-Busch. Dole bristles at the suggestion his foundation is connected to his own career ambitions or those of the GOP.

"I sign letters to some people, but I don't try to put the arm on anybody for this foundation," he said.

Former Democratic Rep. Tony Coelho of California, an epileptic who's worked with Dole on disability issues, said he believes the foundation is "a sincerely felt interest" of Dole's.

"People who question whether he's sincerely interested don't know anything about putting one of these things together," said Coelho, now a New York investment banker and adviser to the Democratic National Committee.

"Just having Bob Dole publicly talk about disability, and his own disability, is a tremendous advantage for us," he said.

Although he's been in public life for 44 years, until recently few people knew about Dole's disability. His shoulder shattered by German machine-gun fire in Italy in 1945, Dole was left with little use of his right arm and hand. He spent years recovering in veterans' hospitals.

Although small as foundations go, the Dole Foundation in 1993 awarded about \$780,000 to a variety of associations and projects seeking to open doors for the disabled.

Gruff exterior hides Dole's gentler side

By CURT ANDERSON
The Associated Press

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Dole shows his softer side

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ble.

"He doesn't want people to think he's using it" for political advantage, Coelho said. "He doesn't want people to consider him only somebody with a disability. He comes from that generation where you don't talk about your disabilities."

Yet Dole has long supported legislation for the disabled, playing a key role in the 1990 passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act that promotes equal opportunity and accessibility. His first Senate floor speech in 1969 was on the same subject.

Despite many gains, Dole said much of society remains fearful and unaccepting of disabled people.

"People find it hard to deal with other people with disabilities," he said. "I've actually seen people cross the street if they saw somebody coming in a wheelchair or with a white cane, because they didn't know how to handle it."

Although small as foundations go, the Dole Foundation in 1993 awarded about \$780,000 to a variety of associations and projects seeking to open doors for the disabled. They range from \$49,000 for Operation Job Match in Washington to \$5,000 for an interpreter so

actress Mary Vreeland Washington cast of the play "by Bertolt Brecht."

also put together a consortium of donors that's built up a similar program.

"The goal is to get to that day people are recognized first for their ability, for their personality," Dole said.

about real people, with real potential, if given a real

Dole willing to open Senate

C-Span may give public more access

By The Associated Press
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