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Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., and his wife, Elizabeth, acknowledge applause from supporters after Dole announced his third bid for the presidency this morning in Topeka.

Dole comes home

Republican announces third bid for presidency

By LEW FERGUSON
Associated Press

TOPEKA — Bob Dole came home today to draw once more on what he always has said is the core of his political strength: the support of fellow Kansans who have elected him five times to the United States Senate.

He officially launched his third bid for Republican nomination for president, an elusive Golden Fleece he has chased for 15 years — since first throwing his hat belatedly into the ring against Ronald Reagan in New Hampshire in 1980.

He also challenged George Bush for the nomination in 1988 and came up short.

"It's great to be in Kansas," Dole declared in a 20-minute announcement speech in Landon Arena at the Kansas Expocentre, an alternative location for his declaration as cold, rainy and blustery weather forced the event indoors.

"You can see many things from atop the hill in Washington where I work, but you can see America from here."

"I'm not the first Kansan to say, 'There's no place like home,' but for me, the words have special meaning," he said.

"Wherever I have traveled in this life, I have never forgotten where I came from, or where I go home to, and that's very important.

"Whatever lessons I have applied in public life were first learned here as a member of the Kansas House of Representatives.

"You can see many things from atop the hill in Washington where I work, but you can see America from here."

He paid tribute to his Kansas supporters, saying he came back from World War II seriously wounded, and was "sustained by the love and generosity of friends and neighbors who renewed my sense of life's possibilities."

"Over the years, they have given me opportunities for service which I can never hope to repay. Because they restored my spirit in a time of trial, I have dedicated myself to restoring the spirit of America.

"And so today, tempered by adversity, seasoned by experience, mindful of the world as it is, yet confident it can be made better, I have come home to Kansas with a grateful heart to declare that I am a candidate for the presidency of the United States."

Dole spoke to an estimated 5,000 enthusiastic supporters and dignitaries who half-filled the arena,

Will the real Bob Dole please stand up?

By SCOTT SHEPARD
Cox News Service

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas begins his final quest for the presidency battling doubts within his own party about how deeply he holds his political convictions.

It is the ultimate irony that Dole faces such doubts after nearly half a century of public service, after 34 years in Congress, after running once on the national GOP ticket and after two previous campaigns for president.

Analysis

The doubts center on whether Dole has any political convictions that are "not subject to negotiation," as William Bennett, former education secretary in the Reagan administration, posed it.

The fact that Dole faces such skepticism indicates just "how much the party has shifted" ideologically since he came to Washington, said former Rep. Vin Weber of Minnesota.

But if the Republican Party has shifted, so has Dole. Always a compromiser, the Senate Majority leader has never more so than in the months since the Republicans took full control of Congress for the first

Dole's supporters are ready to see him become president

TOPEKA (AP) — There were few doubts in the minds of the thousands of supporters who came to hear Bob Dole formally declare his candidacy for Republican nomination for president that the Kansas senator is on his way to the White House.

You could see it in their T-shirts, buttons, hats and signs. And, regardless of whether they were a big supporter, they all wanted to be a part of history.

"I thought it was wonderful, inspirational, hopeful," Derenda Mitchell of Topeka said of Dole's speech. "I hope the rest of the United States learns to know him the way Kansas knows and loves him.

Johnathon Carlisle, a 17-year-old member of Future Farmers of America, called

Dole's speech uplifting. As Dole praised Kansas values and pledged to get tough on crime, Carlisle waved a small American flag amid the hundreds of "Bob Dole for President" signs.

"He's pretty much for everything that I'm for, so he's fun to listen to," he said.

Carlisle drove the 40 miles from Melvern to "see the future president of the United States of America."

Clarice Harris, a Bob Dole supporter from Wichita, said she thought the crowd of about 5,000 was impressive, considering that it was a Monday and the speech was moved from the Statehouse steps to the Kansas Expocenter with only a few hours notice.

She said she wasn't upset that the historic occasion didn't take place at the capitol.

"I'm glad to be able to stay in here and sit down," she said.

A banner proclaimed "We love you Uncle Bob," while members of the crowd on the floor asked "Lead us Dole." Texans and Vietnam vets were also cited among the signs showing support for Dole.

Many people attending the announcement speech liked Dole's old-fashioned Midwestern values — patriotism, honesty, integrity, commitment.

"I think it's the family values and it's the back-to-the-basics," said Vickie Stonecipher of rural Liberty in southeast Kansas.

time in 40 years:

■ A longtime opponent of term limits — "It hurts small states," like Kansas — he says the Senate will vote on it before October.

■ Never supportive of a flat income tax, he says "things have changed" and now "the time is right," to at least look at the flat tax

concept.

■ Having backed a waiting period for handgun purchases during the Bush presidency, he voted against the 1993 Brady Bill and now wants to make its repeal a top priority, though last January he said there were "a lot of things we need to do" before revisiting gun control.

■ Although he once suggested that Oliver North was a traitor to the Reagan administration and perhaps the nation, he endorsed North in his unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. Senate last year.

■ Despite having supported the creation

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named for the late Gov. Alf M. Landon. The estimate came from Linda Schuler, director of marketing for the Expocentre.

Landon's daughter, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, introduced Gov. Bill Graves, who introduced Dole as "ready for Kansas, for the nation and for all of us" to be president.

"This nation is looking for a leader who can regain the respect of the world, recapture respect for the presidency and reclaim the presidency for the American people," Graves added.

Dole said his Kansas roots gave him "common sense and uncommon sensitivity."

"It's what made Dwight Eisenhower (who grew up in Abilene) a great general and a great president," he said. "And it's what prompted Alf Landon, with his unique wisdom, to say, 'There are some intelligent people in Washington, but there are a lot more of them in Kansas.'"

"I hasten to add the same applies to 49 other states, particularly Iowa and New Hampshire."

He alluded to the two states who hold the first Republican caucus and presidential primary in 1996, key tests for Dole if he wants to maintain the frontrunner status for the GOP nomination that early polling has accorded

him.

Kansas' entire congressional delegation was on hand for Dole's announcement, along with Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, Oklahoma Rep. J.C. Watts and other dignitaries.

Among signs that abounded in the 10,000-seat arena were ones saying, "Kansas Love Dole. America Needs Dole. We'll share," "Dole, Heartland Hero," "Take the Hill, Bob," and "Texans, Iowans and North Carolinians for Dole."

Three high school bands were on hand, led by the 150-piece Topeka High School band, the alma mater of Kassebaum and North Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith.

Besides the Landon and Eisenhower connections mentioned by Dole, Cheryl Brown Henderson led the audience in the pledge of allegiance. Her family members were plaintiffs in the original Brown versus Board of Education lawsuit that spawned the historic 1964 Supreme Court decision desegregating U.S. public schools.

Giant banners that had been draped from the south facade of the Capitol in downtown Topeka were moved to the Expocentre Sunday night after the decision was made to move Dole's announcement from the Statehouse steps to the Landon Arena. They provided the backdrop for the stage from which Dole spoke.

At a GOP prayer breakfast earlier today, Dole's wife, Elizabeth told about 1,000 people at a downtown hotel that Christianity is important to her and her husband. The Doles decided to begin the announcement day with a prayer breakfast because "we still believe in beginning each new journey life brings with prayer," she said.

The Rev. Leo Barbee of Victory Bible Church in Lawrence said during his invocation that he would pray for Dole to hold fast to his anti-abortion beliefs.

Dole didn't speak at the breakfast. Dole came to Topeka this time for his official declaration because of the history and for the nostalgia. That is why he had wanted to make his speech on the steps of the Capitol.

Kansas governors are sworn in on the south steps, and Landon immortalized them to generations of Kansans by delivering a ringing address in July 1936 accepting the GOP nomination for president. Landon carried just two states, Maine and Vermont, against Democrat Franklin Roosevelt.

The Capitol also symbolizes Dole coming full circle in his long political career. He began it here in 1951 when he began his first and only two-year term in the Kansas House of Representatives as a 27-year-old law student at Washburn University.

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of the Energy Department, he now wants to abolish it, along with the Education Department and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

■ Previously uncomfortable with the growing influence of the Religious Right in the Republican Party, he has hired key operatives from The Christian Coalition for his campaign.

■ Once a champion of affirmative action programs, he was the first of the 1996 GOP presidential candidates to call for a critical review of such initiatives, with an eye toward repealing or rewriting them.

Indeed, it is Dole's turn on affirmative action that has most disturbed political friends and foes alike.

Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, in a recent Senate floor speech, cautioned against attacks on affirmative action, arguing that "any short-term political success" for Republicans could "prove to be a long-term policy disaster."

And Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., general chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said during a recent breakfast with reporters that he was "extremely disappointed" in Dole for raising the volatile issue.

Dole describes himself now as he has throughout his political career — a

"pragmatic conservative" with a set of basic beliefs that he is unwilling to change because political styles have changed.

He has, after all, witnessed three Republican conservative "revolutions": Barry Goldwater's in 1964, Ronald Reagan's in 1980 and Newt Gingrich's in 1994.

And he has survived them all by perfecting the art of the deal in Congress:

■ Disapproving of big government but willing to work with opponents to, for example, strengthen the food stamp program.

■ Distrustful of welfare but unwilling to slash anti-poverty programs to finance tax cuts.

■ Suspicious of tax increases but willing to support them in order to cut the deficit.

■ Cautious about committing U.S. troops to battle but a staunch proponent of military might.

His talent? "I can bring people together," he told a Republican audience recently.

Nevertheless, Dole has always been under pressure to prove himself to the more conservative wing of his party. Though never intimidated by his party's ideologues, be they Southern evangelicals, angry populists or corporate conservatives, that pressure is not likely let up this presidential run.