

Dole takes hard line on fall agenda

Senate leader not on hand as Congress reconvenes

By The Associated Press
CHICAGO — In a blunt message to the White House and his GOP presidential rivals, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole vowed Tuesday to "fight to the end for fundamental conservative change" in the welfare and budget battles that top the fall congressional agenda.

"This will not be an autumn of compromise — make no mistake about it," Dole said in a speech to the Economic Club of Chicago. "This fall, we will win our fight for revolutionary change vote by vote and bill by bill."

President Clinton responded from California, saying, "There are those who say there should be no compromise this autumn, but I say that good people of good will want us to find common ground."

Dole laid down his marker for the coming legislative debates in a speech that aides had promised would assert the senator's credentials as an economic conservative, something that has been called into question by his rivals for the 1996 GOP nomination.

But he stopped short of endorsing any version of the flat tax gaining support among fel-



The Associated Press
Speaking at the Economic Club of Chicago, Bob Dole says Republicans will be in no mood to compromise on legislation this fall.

low Republicans, including several presidential rivals.

To answer his critics, Dole delivered a detailed critique of Clinton's economic policies, from his 1993 tax increase to what Dole derided as heavy-handed regulation that he said was slowing economic growth, stagnating wages and scaring off entrepreneurs.

"The Clinton economy looks positively anemic," the Kansas Republican said, leaving little doubt he believes Republicans can have the upper hand in 1996 on the centerpiece issue of Clinton's successful 1992 campaign.

As for his own views, Dole promised "a program that embodies opportunity and responsibility for our people — one that strives to create an economy which frees the genius of Americans from the heavy hand of government."

Part of that program, he said, would be lower taxes on capital gains and support for a constitutional amendment requiring a three-fifths vote in Congress to raise taxes.

Beyond that, however, Dole was heavy on optimistic rhetoric about the potential of the American worker and short on specifics, hamstrung in part by his commitment to await the results of a GOP commission studying tax reform.

Dole restated his support for scrapping "the whole twisted wreck of federal tax law" in favor of "lower and flatter rates." Such an approach, he said to applause, would allow the virtual elimination of the Internal Revenue Service. He also said a family of four with annual income of \$30,000 should pay little or no taxes.

Dole said he would stop short of specifics until the release of a report from the commission he established with House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

What's going on with Dole?

What in tarnation is Bob Dole doing? He has nearly completed a difficult personality transition, from Mr. Nasty to Mr. Pretty Good Guy. Image-wise, he has become the most electable of Republicans, a near-moderate.

A recent CNN/USA Today poll, taken after that ludicrous GOP straw poll in Iowa, showed that he still has a huge lead among voters who were asked their preference on the Republican nominee for president.

It's true that Mr. Dole has slipped a bit in the last month, but so have his two "closest" challengers, Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Tex., and firebrand Pat Buchanan.

Mr. Dole still has four times the support of either man. And he still runs a tight hypothetical race against President Clinton.

Yet the Russell Republican — for all of his common sense and political moxie — continues to pander to the far right wing of the GOP like a partisan puppy.

Of course, the question at the beginning of this column is rhetorical. We know why Mr. Dole is doing what he's doing. Despite his common sense and political moxie, he feels he must court the right wing of his party. He knows that the voters surveyed by the national pollsters are not the conservative king-makers who seem to control the GOP's presidential-nomination machine.

And maybe he's still worried about his tie with Mr. Gramm in the Iowa fiasco, though he must know that his big mistake was simply not buying enough votes. Or maybe he just underestimated Mr. Gramm's bankroll.



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He's not going to get the support of the rabid right no matter what he does. He'll never be conservative enough for them, and he'll never get to the right of Mr. Gramm and Mr. Buchanan.

This is not smart, not necessary and not gonna work.

Nobody with any sense can question Bob Dole's credentials as a patriot, a longtime conservative and a loyal Republican. He's still has more support with voters than his top five or six challengers combined. So what's going on with Mr. Dole and his handlers?

Maybe the most disingenuous recent Dole move came a couple of weeks ago when he returned a \$1,000 contribution from the gay group, the Log Cabin Republicans, after he cashed the check.

Mr. Dole's camp solemnly explained that the Log Cabins are against the ban on gays in the military and that he is for it, so he is returning their money because he disagrees with their views.

What really happened is that it was a slow week and the contribution was about to hit the news, and the Dole camp thought it would reflect badly on his conservative credentials.

Now if Mr. Dole really wants to take a stand against sex stuff that he questions, why doesn't he return the tens of thousands of dollars donated to his campaign and his Bet-

ter America Foundation by Time Warner and its executives? Remember them? Some of the purveyors of "depravity" in music and film that Mr. Dole so deplores.

Mr. Dole's push to deny Supplemental Security Income benefits to most legal immigrants — all in the name of welfare reform, of course — isn't his finest stand, either. SSI benefits largely go to disabled people, not to welfare cheats.

Moving to right

Unfortunately, this kind of stuff plays right into the hands of the conservative GOP king-makers. Mr. Dole's current strategy, in fact, loses in two big ways.

■ He's not going to get the support of the rabid right no matter what he does. He'll never be conservative enough for them, and he'll never get to the right of Mr. Gramm and Mr. Buchanan.

■ His attempts to move further to the right have the ugly look and bad smell of gross political expediency. You can almost hear his opponents lining up to ask, "Do you want another panderer in the White House?"

In recent years, Mr. Dole has found his core, largely in the worthy tradition of progressive Kansas Republicanism. Though more conservative than progressive, Mr. Dole is becoming a semi-moderate by contemporary political standards.

I like Bob Dole. He wouldn't be my first choice, but I think he would make a good president. No question he is a smart man and a legendary political operator. He believes that government has a constructive, if limited, role. He knows how things work in Washington and how to get things done. He thinks that he's smart enough and experienced enough to make them work better, and less intrusively.

Perhaps Bob Dole is merely getting, and taking, bad advice. Perhaps his famous political instincts are falling him as he gets closer to the Big Prize.

But even in this hot-button, in-your-face-political era, a return to the bad ol' Bob Dole isn't going to win the day.

He's threatening to make himself into a 1990s version of the Bob Dole of the 1970s and 1980s — a man with little chance to be elected president.

Dole, Gramm unite on welfare proposal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Conservative Republicans claimed a truce Thursday with Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole in their long-running fight over illegitimate births, improving prospects for Senate passage of GOP legislation to dismantle the federal welfare system.

The Senate, meanwhile, rejected a Democratic alternative for reforming welfare, by a virtual party-line vote of 54-45. One Democrat, Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, voted against his party's bill, while one Republican, Sen. Frank Murkowski of Alaska, did not vote.

Sen. Phil Gramm said Dole, his rival for the GOP presidential nomination, had agreed to the demands of conservatives that single mothers be denied "more and more cash ... for having more and more children on welfare."

Under Thursday's compromise, Gramm said, states would be allowed to decide whether to give these families in-kind benefits, such as vouchers for diapers and formula, to care for their children, something sought by abortion opponents who fear that ending all support would encourage more women to have abortions.

He said the bill would also include a provision to reward states that lower rates of out-of-wedlock births without increasing the number of abortions.

Gramm, R-Texas, said he also

won a final concession from Dole to dismantle the federal welfare bureaucracy as the GOP legislation bill shifts programs for the poor to the states in lump sum payments known as block grants.

For his part, Dole was not nearly as specific, telling the Senate only that "I think most of the differences have been resolved on our side because we've tried to base our bill on three principles: creating a real work requirement, returning authority to the states and restraining welfare spending."

"We think these are the principles that are necessary if we're going to provide the dramatic reform, to provide hope and opportunity to the Americans in need."

Gramm said the agreement improves chances the Senate will pass welfare reform, possibly by next Wednesday.

"This is a major breakthrough," Gramm said in an interview. "If we can hold these provisions on the floor and prevent amendments that simply commit us to more welfare, I think we're going to have a very important bill. ... I think we're going to pass this bill."

Gramm said the dispute between him and Dole on the issue of welfare "is now over" although one issue remains to be settled: whether teenagers who have children out of wedlock should be given a welfare check, something some conservatives have demanded.

Dole refuses to sign anti-abortion pledge

Gramm, Dole spar at religious meeting

By The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Facing taunts from supporters of presidential rival Phil Gramm, Bob Dole defended his anti-abortion credentials Friday but refused to sign a pledge supporting the Republican Party's strict platform plank on the issue.

"Don't look at pledges, look at the record," Dole told 4,100 religious conservative activists at the Christian Coalition's annual "Road to Victory" conference, some of whom interrupted Dole's speech by chanting "Sign the pledge."

Gramm, a Texas senator, had set the stage for the confrontation a few hours earlier, waving his copy of a pledge distributed by the Republican National Coalition for Life and urging the religious conservatives to ask Dole why he has refused to sign.

"There is a divine spark in every human life and I will fight for that life," Gramm said to applause.

Dole, in turn, said the crises facing America's families and children would not be resolved until government recognized "the sanctity of all human life."

Privately, several aides said Dole was considering signing the pledge in time for Friday's speech, but dropped the idea after Gramm's ploy.

"I am annoyed at Phil Gramm for doing that," said Sandy Tiller, the Coalition for Life's political director.

The episode reflected the intensity of the competition among most of the Republican White House hopefuls for the support of Christian conservative voters, particularly those active in the 1.7 million member Christian Coalition, the offshoot of religious broadcaster Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential campaign.



The Associated Press
House Speaker Newt Gingrich was among the Republican leaders who addressed the annual Christian Coalition conference Friday.

Packwood submits to pressure, resigns

Senator heads off vote to expel him for misconduct

By The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — In the hushed Senate chamber, a tearful Bob Packwood bowed to extraordinary pressure Thursday and announced his resignation after 27 years in office. His poignant farewell headed off a vote to expel him for sexual and official misconduct.

"It is the honorable thing to do," the Oregon Republican said, quitting only after leaders of the Ethics Committee denounced his behavior in language as harsh as it was blunt. Later, relieved, Packwood told The Associated Press that "an immense weight has been lifted" from him.

Panel chairman Mitch McConnell, a fellow Republican, summarized the evidence against Packwood this way: "There was a habitual pattern of aggressive, blatantly sexual advances, mostly directed at members of his own staff or others whose livelihoods were connected in some way to his power and authority as a senator."

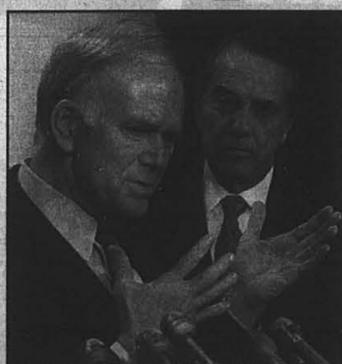
The committee, evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, had spent 33 months on the investigation. It concluded he should be expelled after studying allegations that he made unwanted sexual advances to 17 women, tried to obtain a job for his then-estranged wife from people with legislative interests, and altered his diaries to obstruct the investigation.

Packwood had called his staff into a meeting at mid-afternoon, closing the office for about 15 minutes. Several staff members emerged crying.

"There have been many successes in these 27 years, some failures, some frustrations," Packwood said minutes later, taking to the Senate floor as about half his colleagues and his staff looked on. "Friendships beyond count."

Packwood began the day making the rounds of TV interview shows, pleading for the chance to confront his accusers in a public hearing.

McConnell answered, several hours later: "The committee has heard enough; the Senate has heard enough; the public has heard enough. The evidentiary record, weighing in, as I said, at 40 pounds and 10,145 pages, is here for everyone to see. Now is the time for justice to be done."



File photo
Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (right) said Bob Packwood (left) "has made the right decision. (But) it hasn't been easy."

Documents reveal a worried senator

By The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — More than 10,000 pages of newly released documents in the Bob Packwood case reveal a senator worrying about running afoul of campaign finance laws, contemplating dirty tricks against an opponent and compulsively seeking sexual favors from subordinates and support staff.

Packwood's diaries do not acknowledge the incidents of sexual misconduct cited by the Ethics Committee. As Packwood himself said, he included "nothing about being a rejected suitor — only my successful exploits."

The diaries are part of documents released by the committee in support of its recommendation that Packwood be expelled. The

recommendation became obsolete when Packwood announced his resignation Thursday.

Packwood has denied some allegations of sexual misconduct, admitted that others probably occurred and contended he could not recall still others.

In one of the newly released documents, former Packwood staffer Paige Wagers described an incident when Packwood called her to his office and pinned her against the wall. She said he was "groping" at her body, trying to fondle her breasts and pressed his body against hers "so closely that I could not move." Packwood kissed her.

Another example was Kerry Whitney, a part-time elevator operator at the Capitol, from whom Packwood demanded a kiss nearly every time he was on the elevator alone with her.