

Dole's age on the minds of voters

The Associated Press
DERRY, N.H. — At 78, Ralph Bonner doesn't consider himself old. He still finds time to go line dancing with his wife every Friday.

But ask Bonner if he has the stamina to be president.

"Oh, no," the Derry man says. "Presidents seem to serve a few years and look beaten up."

Bonner, like many others his age, wonders whether someone like Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, who is 72, could handle the stress and strain of the Oval Office.

"It wears men down," Bonner says. "He probably could handle it for a while, but would he serve just one term and end up like Ronald Reagan with Alzheimer's? Who knows?"

While Dole — considered the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination — gets much of his support from the elderly, many of them express concern about his age, drawing comparisons with their own abilities and, in some cases, limitations.

Dole will be 73 after the election, which would make him the oldest person to become president. Reagan was 73 when re-elected but entered the White House at 69.

Bonner, a Republican, has not decided who he will vote for, but his wife, Phyllis, says she has stuck by Dole in the past and plans to cast her vote for him again in New Hampshire's Feb. 20 primary.

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What they're saying about Bob

The Associated Press
 Older Americans give their thoughts on the presidential candidacy of Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, 72:

"Presidents seem to serve a few years and look beaten up. It's sort of iffy. Who knows? He may survive, but the way things are going, I have my fingers crossed." — Ralph Bonner, 78, Derry, N.H.

"By the time he gets elected and gets four years in he'll be over 75. He should retire. They make us retire." — Katherine Wolk, 72, Des Moines, Iowa.

"It's almost unfair. You almost have to say how am I going to predict how this man's health and age is going to be for next four years? History would say it probably will be very difficult for him." — George Wells, 73, Sutton, N.H.

"I don't know anything about Dole, but the guy seems to be quite active politically and physically. How he's going to be after two years, who knows? But how any of these guys are going to be after two



Bob Dole
years, who knows?" — Harry Weber, 77, New London, N.H.

"I like a younger president. One term and then he's going to be 74 or 75, if he's alive. That's pretty old to be a first-term president." — Dorothy Hoppe, 84, Des Moines, Iowa.

"People that age start to deteriorate. Whoever surrounds them has a great deal of influence, you get where you don't know who's running the country." — Bob Silverstein, 69, North Miami Beach, Fla.

cerned about Dole's age but shrugging her shoulders, she adds: "I listen to him. I like him."

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War II combat record running against President Clinton, a Vietnam War protester, Dole says his candidacy is warranted. "Maybe there's one more call to service for my generation," he says.

"Clearly older people like (Dole) better than young people," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Times-Mirror Center for the People and the Press.

A nationwide Times-Mirror poll conducted in September found 25 percent of people 65 and older said there is a good chance they would vote for Dole if he is the Republican nominee in 1996. That compares with 11 percent of people under 30. The poll's margin of error is 3 percentage points.

Dole's active role in the Senate leadership combined with his aggressive campaign schedule convince many that he is healthy enough to take on the presidency.

"The man's been very active, in the throes of the battles in the Senate," said Arthur Pomerantz, an 81-year-old retired real estate salesman living in North Miami Beach, Fla. "At least for the foreseeable future, the next four or five years he should be all right. He seems to be healthy and he's used to the stress."

Ethel Hammer, 96, of Des Moines, Iowa, agrees that age affects people differently.

"I know some people at 72 get Alzheimer's and they're all mixed up. If they've got the right mind, like me, (their age) wouldn't bother me," she said.

Clinton leads Dole in latest poll

Poll shows Kansan gaining GOP support with Powell out of race.

The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole gains Republican support with Colin Powell out of the presidential race, but President Clinton would beat Dole if the 1996 election were held today, a poll indicates.

But many of those questioned in the Time magazine-CNN poll released Saturday are considered "leaners," not strongly behind Dole or Clinton yet, and a Newsweek poll, also released Saturday, puts such a two-way race in a statistical dead heat.

"These numbers don't have a tremendous predictive value yet," said Keating Holland, polling editor at CNN. "All we can say at this point is that given a choice between Dole and Clinton, Clinton would win."

The Time-CNN telephone poll was

conducted Oct. 31-Nov. 6 — before Powell, the retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he wouldn't make a White House bid. But the poll asked the 4,787 registered voters surveyed about their choices with and without Powell in the race.

This "Election Monitor" poll had a margin of error of 1.5 percentage points. Pollsters planned to track these same voters throughout the 1996 campaign to measure trends and changing attitudes.

The Time-CNN poll found that:

- In a Clinton-Dole match-up, 48 percent said they would vote for Clinton and 42 percent would support Dole. (This included so-called leaners.) Four percent said they wouldn't vote, and 6 percent said they weren't sure of their choice.
- Among Republicans, 32 percent said they supported Dole for the GOP

nomination and 24 percent Powell. Without Powell in the race, Dole's support increased to 45 percent, followed by 8 percent for Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas.

Questions continue: Is Dole too old for job? Poll shows Dole gaining, but Clinton likely winner

Older voters divided, but their age group backs Dole the most

By NANCY ROBERTS TROTT
Associated Press
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But ask Bonner if he has the stamina to be president.

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port from the elderly, many of them express concern about his age, drawing comparisons with their own abilities and, in some cases, limitations.

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Mrs. Bonner, 74, says she's concerned about Dole's age but shrugging her shoulders, she adds: "I listen to him. I like him."

Dole tried to diffuse the age issue early in his campaign, releasing medical records that depict him as a man in excellent shape for his age. He also says he's had no recurrence of his 1991 prostate cancer.

Noting the generational contrast of a candidate with a World War II combat record running against President Clinton, a Vietnam War protester, Dole says his candidacy is warranted. "Maybe there's one more call to service for my generation," he says.

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"Younger people may feel he's out of touch, while older people identify with him," Kohut said.

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"The man's been very active, in the throes of the battles in the Senate," said Arthur Pomerantz, an 81-year-old retired real estate salesman living in North Miami Beach, Fla. "At least for the foreseeable future, the next four or five years he should be all right. He seems to be healthy and he's used to the stress."

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Chris Gikas, 75, of Bedford, a fellow World War II vet, said he trusts Dole because of his lengthy experience in Washington. Dole has served in Congress since 1960. However, Gikas said the presidency can take its toll on a man his age.

"Can you see Dole travel to Moscow and Bonn, Germany? That can be terribly wearing," Gikas said.

Pollster Whit Ayres said he has found a direct correlation between elderly voters and concern over age. Ayres' Atlanta-based polling firm Ayres and Associates has worked for Dole's rival, former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, who has not refrained from implying that Dole is too old for the job.

"Common sense and logic dictate it," said Ayres, who admitted he has no polling on Dole himself. "Older people realize they do not have the energy they had 10 years earlier."

But Naomi Stack, 69, a widow and retired teacher who lives at Point East condominiums in North Miami Beach, Fla., says she sees no reason that a 72-year-old couldn't be president.

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- In a Clinton-Dole match-up, 48 percent said they would vote for Clinton and 42 percent would support Dole. (This included so-called leaners.)
- If the election were held today, 26 percent said they would definitely vote for Clinton and 41 percent said they would definitely vote against him. The same question wasn't asked about Dole.
- Among Republicans, 32 percent said they supported Dole for the GOP nomination and 24 percent Powell. Without Powell in the race, Dole's support increased to 45 percent, followed by 8 percent for Sen. Phil Gramm, of Texas.
- Some 85 percent of blacks support Clinton.
- Women favor Clinton over Dole, 53 percent to 37 percent.
- Men prefer Dole, 48 percent to 43 percent.

Gramm campaign criticizes Dole's politics

MIAMI (AP) — The race for GOP presidential candidates to the Florida straw set Saturday intensified when Bob Dole's campaign began calling delegates to criticize rival lawmaker Phil Gramm of missing key Senate votes.

Gramm's presidential campaign on Friday accused front-runner Dole of "desperation politics" in using the negative phone campaign prior to the Nov. 18 Florida straw poll.

Tom Feeney, the Florida co-chairman of Gramm's campaign, said the phone effort by Dole's campaign was reminiscent of one used in the 1994

Florida gubernatorial election that has embroiled Democratic Gov. Lawton Chiles in controversy. Feeney, a candidate for lieutenant governor in 1994 and gubernatorial candidate Jeb Bush lost a narrow bid to oust Chiles from office after the negative, and misleading, phone campaign to senior citizens just before elections.

The Dole campaign made phone calls recently to delegates from 15 key counties who will attend the Nov. 17-18 Presidency III convention in Orlando. The convention will be attended by more than 3,000 delegates.

Dole spokesman Nelson Warfield defended the calls, describing Gramm as "the Darth Vader of negative politics."

"Our communications program, both mail and phone, has focused on his record," Warfield said of Gramm. "While Gramm proclaims his support for the Contract with America, he missed 22 key votes for passage of the Contract. Delegates to Presidency III and Florida voters should know that."

"I don't believe the age would be an asset or a disadvantage," she said. "It depends mainly on his health. I know people who are 92 and 93 who are more alive than some teenagers. It's your positive attitude."

"You can vegetate or you can live," she said.

Debate remark puts Dole in hot seat

The Associated Press
CONCORD, N.H. — Republican presidential contenders got tangled in a debate over debates after Bob Dole's camp said the GOP front-runner was willing to "debate any candidate" on conservative issues.

At least two candidates quickly pounced on the offhand remark by New Hampshire Gov. Steve Merrill, who this week was named Dole's general campaign chairman, and proposed new debates.

Dole's camp just as quickly pointed to the three debates that he's already committed to attending.

The confusion began when Merrill said Dole wants to "talk conservative issues — less government, lower taxes and values that pull us together."

"We're willing to debate any candidate on those issues," he said.

Former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander immediately sought a one-on-one face-off

with Dole.

And then Texas Sen. Phil Gramm suggested a free-for-all between Dole and the rest of the field during the Nov. 18-21 Republican Governors Association conference in Nashua. Gramm suggested WMUR-TV broadcast the proposed debate.

The meeting "presents a rare opportunity, for most of the presidential candidates will be in one place at the same time," the Gramm campaign said in a statement. "A debate would pro-

vide the perfect opportunity for the people of New Hampshire to hear a frank discussion of each candidate's vision for America."

Bill Cahill, state director of the Alexander campaign, arrived at WMUR on Friday to begin formal discussions, although no other campaigns showed up.

He expressed doubt that Merrill, as host of the governors' conference, would change the format to allow for a debate.

"The debate format gives vot-

ers an opportunity to compare and contrast the candidates," he said. "After all, we are in a race."

Dole's camp said it would be a waste of time to debate Alexander alone.

His organizers issued a list of the debates it has agreed to attend without directly addressing Gramm's proposal.

"I think the debate over debates is a sure sign that the silly season of politics has arrived," said campaign spokesman Nelson Warfield.