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SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI, May 5 -- U.S. Senator Bob Dole today said, "The only direct financial benefit received by nine Kansas counties from membership in the Ozarks Regional Commission is a grant to Pittsburg for use in developing an industrial park."

Dole, who is here with other members of the Senate Public Works Subcommittee on Economic Development, added, "Although other projects are being considered, the question arises as to what short- and long-range benefits can accrue to Kansas if 1) Nine counties continue to be a part of the commission; 2) a larger portion or the whole state is included in the commission."

Dole noted, in the hearing on the Commission, that the nine Kansas counties/are Allen, Bourbon, Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson and Woodson.

He also said Oklahoma Governor Dewey Bartlett has attributed a 600% increase in new plant investment in the past 26 months in part to the "approach of the Ozarks Regional Commission."

"Can the state of Kansas point to such substantive advances in the past 26 months?," Dole asked. "If it cannot, is it because the Commission has been unable to provide leadership or is it because the state has not established its priorities correctly?"

Pointing out the regional commission concept "is a unique form of government", he said, "The federal and state levels of government have been given an equal voice on policy, program and implementation. The recognition that economy, demography and environment of an area are not circumscribed by state or county boundaries is significant."

"While the objective of the commission, to devise 'a program and create a climate for growth so that economic activity can flourish and expand in the region' is commendable, it is my hope that in this hearing and by other studies, we can discover if this objective is being met," he added.