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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE HANDICAPPED

U.S. Sen. Bob Dole introduced during the first week of the 92nd Congress a bill that seeks to close the "information gap" for many of the country's 42 million handicapped citizens.

The Kansas junior senator, who himself is disabled, knows firsthand of the many difficulties handicapped persons confront daily. "Common to all of these problems," Dole believes, "is incomplete and inaccessible information."

Dole's bill proposes the creation of a central clearinghouse for all information concerning services and resources pertinent to the disabled.

Much information on and for the handicapped already exists, as do many services and some financial aid; but Dole stresses "None is of any use unless it is known and easily accessible to those persons who are in need."

What he regards as both "encouraging and frustrating," is the fact that "presently we have the know-how and the resources to restore many more of the disabled to productive lives than are now being served." His bill would connect the two together: the disabled and the available resources. "This union," Dole explains, "would result in benefits both to the handicapped individual and to our nation's economy, gains that would far outstrip the funds or energy expended in establishing such a center."

A recent report from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare partially illustrates the tragedy of the disabled's "information gap" and the need for Dole's legislation. In the area of rehabilitation, HEW indicated that about 25 per cent of America's handicapped have not received rehabilitation services and do not know where to seek help.

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U.S. Sen. Bob Dole
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Dole contends that not only is information about rehabilitation incomplete and with limited access, but much the same can be said for information about employment, health care and economic aid. "Knowledge of resources, research findings, technical assistance and information about what other governmental units and private concerns are doing to accommodate handicapped people, is diffused and lacking in coordination.

The Dole bill (S.41) would establish a National Information and Resource Center for the Handicapped within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. It is designed to insure that all information relating to the handicapped is coordinated and made available to those individuals in the form they can use. The Center would not duplicate the function of any government or private program. Rather, it would be the "duty and function of the Center to cooperate with and assist other appropriate information sources."

It would provide a contact point for the handicapped and their families, private organizations, professional groups and city and state officials who desire information or direction.

Dole believes such a center would fill a great void: "It is an answer to a specific and well-defined need and would meet this need at a reasonable cost."

Senate Bill 41 would appropriate \$300,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1972. The Center would require a small staff to receive and direct inquiries to specialized contacts --- to universities, individuals, organizations and agencies that have special knowledge or have worked successfully on aspects of these problems.

Last June Dole introduced a similar bill that was favorably received by all sectors of the handicapped community. The provisions of this bill passed the Senate in September, but time ran out in the last session of Congress before the bill could be thoroughly considered by the House of Representatives.

The bill's Capitol Hill groundwork is now firm. Dole has pledged to make every effort to assure early enactment in the 92nd Congress of this legislation, and believes chances are good for its passage.

Discussing the Center's effect, Dole observed, "The 42 million Americans who belong to the handicapped minority will be the immediate and long-term beneficiaries of the Center's service; but America will be the ultimate beneficiary, through increased contributions, well-being and personal fulfillment of the handicapped."

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