

FROM: THE OFFICE OF U.S. SEN. BOB DOLE
NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

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THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO DRUG ABUSE

By U.S. Sen. Bob Dole

This month the President proposed a bold new program to deal with the agonizing problem of drug abuse in this country. In recent years, the problem has expanded to national emergency proportions, causing hundreds of thousands of American lives to be wasted every year ; and many are those of our most promising young people. Up to now, efforts for drug abuse prevention and treatment have been inadequate. As the President pointed out in his message to Congress on June 17, "piecemeal efforts," though individually successful, "cannot have a major impact on the drug abuse problem."

Special Action Office

Included in the recently announced White House plan, is the establishment of a Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, which would serve as a central authority to coordinate all federal efforts. Recently I cosponsored the bill which would establish the office.

The legislation, Senate Bill 2097, which has been referred to the Senate Committee on Government Operations, provides that the Special Office take overall responsibility for all major federal drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, rehabilitation and training programs in all federal authorities.

Under this bill, programs from more than five departments and agencies will be supervised by a director. Accountable to the President, the director will have the authority to prescribe policies, prepare budgets and set priorities.

Beyond Legislation

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this legislation that will eliminate bureacratic red tape and jursidictional disputes between agencies making it possible to mount a coordinated national attack on a national problem. As late as last year, coordination was handled by

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an ad hoc committee chaired by a special assistant in the White House who had numerous additional responsibilities.

Details of this legislation aside, no one can dispute the great need that led to its formulation and introduction; and I am hopeful it will receive a prompt hearing. It is imperative, however, that we not deceive ourselves. Enforcement, education and rehabilitation will not ultimately solve the problem. Beyond these immediate needs of an anti-drug abuse program, we must address ourselves to the underlying causes of much of the drug addiction in this country.

The President's Omnibus Drug Control Legislative Program, which includes the establishment of an office in the Executive, is, in my opinion, a large step in the right direction.