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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.-Kans.)

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Joe Reppert—Press Secretary

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 27, 1972 --- U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) introduced this week a bill that would permit farmers to continue to hire young people to drive farm vehicles, both for individual farm operations and for large custom service operations.

Speaking from the Senate floor, Dole explained that the Federal Highway Administration announced last year that it would enforce regulations prohibiting the interstate operation of farm trucks by persons under 21 years of age. These regulations were officially scheduled to go into effect July 1, 1971.

Dole said his bill would exempt young men and women from the proposed regulations, allowing them to operate farm vehicles of a gross weight up to 50,000 pounds within a 200 mile radius of the farm.

Pointing out the need for his legislation, Dole said:

A good deal of the day-to-day work on the farm is accomplished by hauling something in a truck, whether it be grain, milk or supplies; and young men and women under 21 years of age are utilized as drivers. Depending on state regulations, boys and girls are taught to drive at a young age, and are helpful around the farm because they are alert and able to operate these vehicles. Older men, over 21, are just not readily available, and the wages the farmer can pay them are far less than they can earn for a few hours in the urban areas.

The Dole bill differs from previous legislation which would permit young people to drive farm vehicles, because it includes the provision for custom harvest operations, while other measures provide exemptions only for regular farming operations.

Dole explained that the combination of capital investment and urgency has brought about custom wheat harvesting.

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An individual farmer could not afford to own the five or six combines and trucks needed for harvesting. The wheat farmer, therefore, hires a custom harvest crew that will harvest his fields using many combines and trucks.

Some custom wheat harvesters are individual farmers who have invested in several combines and trucks, and supplement their own farm income by harvesting the crop of their neighbors. Other farmers and individuals own and operate fleets of combines that are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and form up in Texas and Oklahoma in late May, and harvest wheat all summer for farmers from Texas to North Dakota and on into Canada.

In the High Plains area of Kansas, these custom operators harvest about 50 per cent of the wheat crop. These custom operators also hire our young high school and college youth to drive their combines and trucks. Many young men are able to finance their college education by working the wheat harvest in the summer. It is good work and pays young men well who are willing to work hard. It is difficult to find men 21 or older to spend the summer at such a job.

Urging the bills approval, Dole said:

The use of these young drivers is especially needed during harvest periods, and in Kansas and the surrounding states, we are now preparing to harvest our winter wheat crop. The combines will enter the fields any day now, and the trucks that haul the grain from the combines in the fields to the storage bins on the farm will most likely be driven by the farmer's son or daughter, or another teenager hired for the purpose. The farmers of this nation, whether they are hauling wheat, corn, cattle, insecticides, fertilizer, or whatever use they have for a truck, depend on these young people to drive for them. To forbid a teenager to drive a farm vehicle would cause undue hardship to the agricultural community.