



SENATOR BOB DOLE

of Kansas

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DOLE APPLAUDS EFFORTS TO CURB MEDICAID FRAUD AND ABUSE

Dallas, Texas -- Senator Bob Dole, Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Health, today joined with Senator Herman Talmadge, Chairman of that panel, in introducing what he described as a "first step" legislative response to the growing problem of fraud and abuse in federal health programs.

Their bill, which already has the formal support of more than 30 members of the Senate, will put new teeth into the Medicare and Medicaid enforcement effort by authorizing a special unit within HEW to coordinate and direct investigations of alleged fraud and abuse. It would also change the category of such violations from misdemeanors to felonies -- carrying penalties of up to five years' imprisonment and \$10,000 fines.

"We have been looking at this problem for more than a year now," Dole said, "and view this measure as just a beginning of the type of reform which may be required to get some degree of control over the matter. No one is passing the buck with this, for we are all in agreement that there is joint responsibility by the Congress, the Executive branch, and the States for what has taken place."

"The Secretary of HEW initiated administrative actions earlier this year to address the need for increased attention in the area," Dole continued, "and this legislation will serve to complement that effort. As a matter of fact, it will enhance his ability to deal affirmatively with the problem by beefing up his investigative staff and enabling him to dispatch such personnel to provide states with direct assistance."

Besides applauding these undertakings by the Administration, Dole noted that credit should be given to the recent work by his and other Congressional Committees "to expose and deal with the abusers of these programs head-on. It is also significant and reassuring, I

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- 2 -

think, that some meaningful steps have been taken at the state level to reduce the mismanagement and eliminate the dollar-soaking exploitation of Medicare and Medicaid."

Offering a specific example of the latter, Dole recalled that Governor Busbee of Georgia, a Democrat and successor to Jimmy Carter, testified to the Finance Committee in late July that he had instituted comprehensive Medicaid reforms less than two months after taking office. "I guess it was to clean up the mess he inherited from the previous administration," Dole said.

"Apparently," Dole added, "the situation in Georgia was so bad when Governor Busbee took over that he has even had to ask the Ford Administration to send in a team of HEW investigators to help straighten things out. I know he expressed the hope during our Senate hearings that the 'waste, extravagance, and outright fraud' would come to a screeching halt, but since nothing had been done about it by the previous Governor, I can understand why additional assistance would be needed.

The Talmadge-Dole bill, even though being introduced less than a month before Congress is scheduled to adjourn, "has an excellent chance of being enacted," in the opinion of the Republican Vice Presidential candidate. "I am going to urge the President to support it, and I have every reason to believe he will view it as a constructive attempt to translate the same concerns he has expressed into a partial solution."

"While it doesn't go as far as he would probably like in reducing duplicative authority and responsibility by turning operation of Medicaid over entirely to the states, it is a useful approach to giving all levels involved some of the tools they now lack." President Ford has maintained for some time that the administration of Medicaid could be improved by giving the states complete flexibility to implement the program through a block-grant approach.

-30-