

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

2213 Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER
(202) 224-6521

DOLE URGES RUSSIANS TO "MEET PRESIDENT REAGAN HALFWAY" ON GRAIN

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R.-Kan.) today urged the Soviet Union to "meet President Reagan halfway" by accepting the U.S. offer of a one-year extension of the grain agreement between the two countries.

In a follow-up to the White House announcement this morning, Dole and Iowa Senator Roger Jepsen telephoned Alexander A. Bessmertnykh, Minister-Counselor at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, to encourage a positive response to the President's decision to pursue a continued grain trading structure.

"Mr. Bessmertnykh was particularly pleased that the U.S. is prepared to move ahead with consultations under the agreement framework that could result in additional grain being offered for sale in the year beginning this October 1," Dole stated. "While he had not yet seen the details of the President's statement, he assured us that the offer would receive careful and serious study by appropriate Soviet officials and that he would communicate our interest and encouragement to Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin, currently in Moscow."

"This is the second time that Senator Jepsen and I have contacted Soviet officials to ensure a continued dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union on grain trade policy," Dole indicated. "With so much disagreement and misunderstanding in other areas of our relationship, we've got to be reminded now and then that the resumed sale of corn, wheat and other farm products is in the economic best interest of the United States."

Dole concluded that "I realize that some of our friends in the European Economic Community may accuse the Administration of being inconsistent in its foreign policy by selling grain to the Russians while opposing construction of the Siberian natural gas pipeline. I would respond that the United States should actively seek ways to soak up Soviet foreign exchange revenues in whatever manner is consistent with our national interest -- particularly through increased sales of U.S. agricultural products."