

BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 1984

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DOLE CALLS FOR SPEEDY HOUSE ACTION ON COMMODITY IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE

WASHINGTON -- Kansas Senator Bob Dole today called for quick and clean House action on a major farm bill, which includes key changes in the 1984 and 1985 wheat programs. "Farmers in Kansas and other farm states can take real credit for keeping the pressure on their Senators to get this legislation approved," Dole said of the program improvement package that cleared the Senate by a 78-10 vote late Thursday. "Now it is up to the Democrats who control the House of Representatives to either take the Senate bill as it stands or more quickly to convene a joint Conference meeting next week."

Senate action followed eight months of stalemate due to the refusal of one or two Democratic Senators to allow any farm legislation to be voted on. Dole has led the fight to reopen this year's wheat program by bringing farm state Senators and top Administration officials together for a week of intense negotiations in early March. With minor changes, the bill passed by the Senate yesterday was hammered out in the course of those discussions.

"Agriculture Secretary Block has indicated he will reopen the wheat sign-up as soon as Congress makes clear it will approve the bill," Dole added. "The Democrat majority in the House will have to move quickly next week in order to schedule a one or two-week sign-up period in early April."

"One of the real benefits of the bill is that the USDA would announce the remaining details of the 1985 wheat program by June, and sign-up could take place in late July or August," Dole stated. "Early announcement of the full 1985 wheat program, and an early producer sign-up this summer, would be a great relief for Kansas wheat producers."

Known as the "Agricultural Commodity Adjustment Act of 1984," the Dole legislation would revise the 1984 wheat program to include a \$4.38 target price, a 20% unpaid acreage reduction, and a 10% paid land diversion at a \$2.70 per bushel payment rate. The payment rate for the optional 10-20% PIK program would be raised from 75% to 85% of farm yield. For 1985, wheat producers would be provided the same target price, reduced acreage requirement and diversion payment terms as in the 1984 program.

The bill would also freeze target prices for other major commodities -- including feed grains, cotton and rice -- at their 1984 levels for 1985 crops, and provide for 5% paid diversion programs if carryover stocks exceed specified levels. In addition to the changes in domestic farm programs, the legislation adds \$2.1 billion in federal financing for agricultural exports in fiscal years 1984 and 1985, and would convert \$250 million in economic emergency Farmers Home Administration loans from bank guarantees to direct lending by the agency.

"We also included unrestricted haying and grazing privileges on diverted wheat acres for this year's program," Dole stated. "I know Kansas wheat and livestock producers have strongly supported this provision, and will benefit from passage of the legislation."