

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: ROBERT BORTHWICK
(202) 224-6521

DOLE INTRODUCES CHILD CARE INITIATIVE

Washington, D.C. -- On the opening of the 2nd Session of the 100th Congress, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) underscored his intention to make child care a top priority by introducing legislation to coordinate federal programs relating to children and to help parents find safe, affordable child care.

"Issues affecting children are at the forefront of our national consciousness today," said Sen. Dole. "The composition of our workforce is changing and many parents are confronted with the stark choice of leaving their children at home alone or in the hands of unlicensed providers. Supply must be brought into line with demand if we are to adequately care for our children."

The Dole legislation, called "The Federal Child Care and Child Development Act of 1988," would establish a national advisory council on children's issues to coordinate federal programs affecting children. Currently, a variety of these programs are administered by different federal departments with virtually no inter-agency cooperation. The council would also serve as a national advocate of children's concerns and help develop a consistent strategy to combat such problems as child abuse, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and the high drop-out rate.

Declaring that it is time that the federal government came to grips with demographic realities, Dole would create a new child care grant program, targeted at increasing the availability of child care services to low and moderate income parents. He cited the growth that has occurred in the female work force among women with small children. Fifty percent of working mothers have children under six years of age.

The grants could be used for a variety of activities, including:

- Neighborhood child care centers, after-school child care programs, and start-up costs for on-site child care offered by small business employers;
- Establishment of "Grandcare" programs which would recruit and train senior citizens to serve as child care workers;
- Assistance to help family-based child care providers and others meet state licensing standards;
- Coordination with existing programs, including Head Start, Chapter One, and preschool programs for disabled children to extend the hours of operation to help employed parents; and
- Voucher programs to assist with child care costs for low-income parents.

The initiative would be paid for by phasing out the dependent care tax credit for upper-income families. Although a strong supporter of the dependent care tax credit in the past, Sen. Dole emphasized the need to reassess priorities in light of the federal deficit situation and the need for affordable child care.