

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

ANTI-TERRORISM BILL

SENATE PASSES TOUGH ANTI-TERRORISM BILL WITH LONG OVERDUE DEATH PENALTY APPEALS REFORM; STRONG, DOLE-BACKED REFORMS RETAINED; DOLE LEADERSHIP HAILED BY PAN AM 103 FAMILIES

Just short of a year ago, this country was rocked by an attack on the Alfred Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In the wake of that horrible incident -- in only a matter of weeks -- the Senate responded by passing the Dole-Hatch comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation by a vote of 91-8 on June 7, 1995. Most of its provisions were drawn from earlier Republican crime packages. Over the past month, we worked in a bipartisan manner to craft what will surely be the toughest anti-terrorism bill ever to become law.

This week, to honor the memory of those who suffered in Oklahoma, the Congress will send to President Clinton this landmark, bipartisan antiterrorism bill. It has the support of the Republican Governor of Oklahoma, Frank Keating, and Oklahoma's Democrat Attorney General, Drew Edmondson.

Under the leadership of Senator Hatch, we have a measure which will give us the strong, upper hand in the battle to prevent and punish domestic and international terrorism.

Dole Successfully Insists on Tough Provisions

On March 27, 1996, I wrote each of the conferees urging in particular that three important provisions in the Senate bill be retained. The first facilitates the speedy removal of suspected foreign terrorists from U.S. soil. The second keeps foreign terrorists from raising money for their activities in the U.S. And the third makes membership in a terrorist organization the basis for exclusion from the U.S.

Each of these is a common-sense protection for all Americans. Each of these reforms is long overdue. I am pleased that Senator Hatch and the conferees insisted on keeping these important reforms in the bill.

Curbing Frivolous Death Penalty Appeals

Most importantly, the bill contains comprehensive, effective habeas corpus reform. At long last, after more than a decade of effort, we are about to curb these endless, frivolous appeals of death sentences by those convicted of murder. Habeas corpus reform is the only substantive provision in this bill that will directly affect the Oklahoma city bombing case. It is the heart and soul of the bill.

I sent a letter Monday to President Clinton. In that letter, I reiterated that we simply cannot continue allowing convicted murderers to appeal their sentences year after year. President Clinton has already vetoed a similar reform of the death penalty appeals process. And the White House continued right up to the end to argue for changes in habeas corpus that would essentially gut this reform. I called on President Clinton to support us in this important effort and sign this bill when it is sent to his desk. America will not tolerate a second veto of habeas corpus reform.

Allow Victims to Sue Terrorist States

I am very pleased, moreover, that the conference report provides victims of terrorism the ability to sue foreign governments responsible for terrorist acts in U.S. courts for the first time. On December 21, 1988, 270 people were killed in the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. This brutal act of terrorism killed more Americans than died in Desert Storm.

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The Libyan government was clearly responsible for this brutal crime. Yet, Libya refuses to extradite the Libyan intelligence officials responsible. I don't know anyone who believes there is a realistic chance that Qaddafi will cooperate to bring killers he ordered to justice in a legitimate court.

For too long, the survivors of the victims have had no recourse to seek compensation from Libya. That's why the Dole-Hatch bill last year contained authority for victims of international terrorism to sue terrorist states in U.S. courts. For 10 months the Clinton Administration fought this provision. For three years the Clinton Administration has had meetings with family members and had tough rhetoric -- but there has been no real action to redress the tragedy of Pan AM Flight 103.

This week the Congress will enact this important reform. This is not rhetoric, this is action. This is historic and will, at long last, allow American victims of terrorism to use U.S. courts to try to seek compensation for the vicious acts of terrorist states.

I am proud to have worked closely with the families of the Pan AM 103 victims for many years, especially in the 1990 Aviation Security Act. Nothing we do can possibly replace their loss, but we can give them an avenue for partial justice.

Yesterday I received a letter from Victoria Cummock, President of the Families of Pan Am 103/Lockerbie. On behalf of those families, she urged support of this bill, and she focuses on two provisions: habeas corpus reform; and opening up our courts to allow victims their day in court against governments that sponsor terrorism.

National Interest Ahead of Partisan Interest

In passing this bill, the Congress will put the national interest ahead of partisan interests. However, there are those who delayed passage of this historic bill -- they argued that this is a "weak bill." They are clearly wrong. It is unfair to those who have suffered or may suffer in the future from the evil handiwork of terrorists and other criminals.

My colleagues have opposed these efforts successfully, and we will pass this bill today. As Diane Leonard, whose husband Don was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, said yesterday: "It is the right thing to do." Then I hope President Clinton will do the right thing and sign the bill.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 5:50 p.m.