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NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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KANSANS PROTEST PARDON OF DRAFT EVADERS

Senator Bob Dole said today that his Washington office has received numerous letters and phone calls from Kansans during the past month objecting to the Presidential pardon of Vietnam-era draft evaders, including two Kansas veterans who sent their own war medals as a protest of the pardon.

Mr. James Roberts of Kansas City, Kansas, returned his Purple Heart Award. He had been wounded while serving in Italy in 1944. Mr. Frank E. Wonka III of Bonner Springs, Kansas, returned an Armed Forces Expeditionary Service medal earned while serving in Vietnam.

Dole, himself a World War II veteran and an opponent of the Presidential pardon, said he was particularly impressed by the gesture of the two Kansas veterans. "These men had been honored for their selfless devotion to their country's defense, yet both felt that their efforts had been cheapened by President Carter's generous pardon of draft evaders in January," Dole remarked. "I understand that many others throughout the country have returned their medals or resigned their commissions in protest of the pardon, and these actions reflect the demoralizing influence which the President's amnesty order had on many patriotic Americans."

Senator Dole had earlier criticized the blanket pardon of Vietnam-era draft evaders as ignoring the specific motives associated with individual cases of draft evasion. "Not all evaders shirked their duty because of moral objections to the Vietnam War," Dole noted. "Some did so as a matter of personal convenience or financial gain. Such cases should have been considered individually on their own merits."

Dole said he would request that the veterans keep their medals as legitimate recognition of their honorable service to the United States in time of need.