



# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1977

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## DOLE AMENDMENT WOULD REQUIRE INDEPENDENT GAO STUDY ON AIRBAG EFFECTIVENESS

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Senator Bob Dole today introduced an amendment that would require the General Accounting Office to conduct an independent investigation into the costs, benefits and drawbacks of alternative passenger restraint systems.

Following is the text of the introductory statement he made at that time:

'Mr. President, I call up an unprinted amendment and ask for its immediate consideration.

This is a very simple amendment which I feel would help resolve many of the concerns expressed about S. Con. Res. 31. This amendment requires that the General Accounting Office conduct an independent investigation into the costs, benefits and drawbacks of alternative passenger restraint systems. This study will evaluate lap belts, shoulder harnesses, air bags and Volkswagen-type passive style seatbelts.

The minority views filed on S. Con. Res. 31 point up the serious issue under debate. This primary issue is simply whether enough information is currently available to justify the mandatory installation of air bags. The Senator from Kansas feels that there is not.

The major evidence relied on by the Commerce Committee has been furnished by the Department of Transportation. While I do not question the sincerity of the DOT officials involved, they have undeniably taken an advocate position in favor of air bags. A tendency to arrange the information in the best light can easily be discerned from the testimony of Secretary Adams and others in DOT.

While DOT has looked into different parts of the passenger safety problem, they have not attempted a comprehensive study. Looking at the evidence DOT submitted, questions as to their conclusions can certainly be raised. Other experts have evaluated the same data and have taken much different positions.

Studies by the automobile industry have come up with findings diametrically opposite to DOT's conclusion on the issue of safety. However, the Committee report is skeptical of these studies saying there "was a large degree of judgmental decisions built into their comparisons which may have affected the outcome of the study." I not only share this healthy cynicism but would in fairness extend it to the DOT conclusions also.

The only way to resolve this difference of opinion is to have a thorough, independent study made by an uninterested source. The General Accounting Office has no stake in whether air bags are placed in cars and could offer an unbiased, expert opinion.

The General Accounting Office has a very limited on-going study. The only question GAO is looking into is the adequacy of the evidence DOT used in projecting the benefits of mandatory passive restraints. GAO should have a clear Congressional mandate to extend this study and make a comprehensive report on all passenger restraint systems.

Mr. President, until such a comprehensive report has been made, I cannot support the DOT rule. If my amendment is attached to this resolution, Congress will be acting constructively. Not only will the highly questionable air bag standard be held in abeyance, but we will also have taken the necessary action to gather the information we need. When the GAO report is received not later than December 31, 1978, Congress can make a much more informed decision on the air bag issue. I therefore urge the Senate to adopt the amendment and act favorably on the entire resolution."

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When this amendment was defeated, Senator Dole announced that he would introduce a separate resolution to accomplish the same purpose. Senator Dole received the assurance of Senator Ford, that the Commerce Committee would consider his resolution.