



# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.-Kans.)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1979

## DOLE SAYS SSI BILL WILL ENCOURAGE HANDICAPPED TO REMAIN EMPLOYED

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today introduced a bill to remove work disincentives which now make it difficult for severely handicapped persons to attain gainful employment and financial independence.

The Dole bill amends Title XVI of the Social Security Act to eliminate the most serious barriers in the Supplemental Security Income program.

"Under current law, there is no middle ground for handicapped persons -- one must be either completely dependent on public welfare or totally self-sufficient," Dole said. "There is no recognition that a handicapped person can have severe disabilities, monthly medical bills, and attendant care expenses, yet still have work potential. My bill is designed to meet the needs of those who have severe medical disabilities, but who can still hold full-time or part-time employment."

The Dole bill, cosponsored by Sens. Moynihan, Bentsen, Ribicoff, Cranston, Danforth and Schweiker, contains five provisions allowing handicapped persons to move into the job market without a total loss of SSI benefits:

1) Presumptive Disability -- If a person leaves SSI to take a job and finds he is unable to continue working, he may return to the SSI rolls without first going through the lengthy process of re-establishing disability.

2) Income from Sheltered Workshops -- Income from sheltered workshops shall be considered as earned, rather than unearned. This means that the first \$65 is exempt under SSI. It is now considered as unearned income, and only the first \$20 is exempt.

3) Extending Cash Benefits -- Handicapped persons will continue to receive cash payments under SSI even after they reach the substantial gainful activity level (\$280 per month). Their payments will be equal to those the blind now receive.

4) Extending Medicaid -- After the break-even point is reached where benefits are phased out (\$443), the secretary of HEW may continue Medicaid benefits if it can be shown that without the medical assistance the person would be unable to continue working.

5) Attendant Care -- In determining substantial gainful activity, the cost of attendant care is disregarded.

"As society becomes more and more accepting of the handicapped taking meaningful employment, we must do all we can to provide access to jobs for those who want them," Dole said. "The current program of SSI benefits places an unrealistic burden on those handicapped who wish to become more financially independent. My bill provides a gradual phasing out of government assistance, yet respects the problems facing the handicapped as they strive to lessen their dependence on that assistance."