



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE URGES KANSAS INPUT INTO POPULATION PROJECTION METHOD

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today called on the Commerce Department to encourage consideration of proposals made by local government officials in Kansas and throughout the country to ensure their input into future federal population projections, which are used in allocating federal funds.

The Commerce Department's Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis are currently in the process of developing the methodology, which will be announced by July. A period for comments will follow, which probably will last 90 days.

"While I am reserving judgment as to whether population projections should be used at all as a criteria in determining federal aid, if they are to be used, it is crucial that we have consistent, accurate, dependable projections on which to rely," Dole said today in a letter to Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps.

"I need not tell you how important federal funding has become to states such as Kansas. Washington's control over state and local development has grown tremendously. Federal money is often necessary to get a project off the ground. I often question this dependence on governmental largess, but it has become a fact of life. As population projections begin to enter into the funding picture, it is necessary to establish a consistent procedure for developing the projections."

In the past, federal agencies have used many different sets of population projections, as have the state agencies in Kansas. But in the last five years, the use of population projections has changed. Perhaps the most significant single action has been the decision of the Environmental Protection Agency to use a Bureau of Economic Analysis population projection to set limits on sewer system design sizes which they would fund, Dole said. Unfortunately, the projections they chose anticipate a rapidly continuing population decline in many parts of Kansas.

Some Kansas regional planning organizations have developed projections that identify, in contrast, slow but steady population increases in many parts of Kansas. This discrepancy in projections has led to several run-ins with the EPA. Apparently, these regional planning organizations were not alone, as many of the major metropolitan areas in the country were experiencing similar problems.

"Because of these problems," Dole said, "the Office of Management and Budget has decided that if the distribution of federal funds is going to be based upon population projections, a more workable and accurate set of projections is needed, and I agree.

"Nonetheless, I am seriously concerned about the adverse impact such projections could have on rural areas such as Kansas. Projections of declining growth, in relation to the rest of the country, could have a drastic effect on the growth of the state. With no government money available to fund the many projects necessary to attract members of our mobile public, they could become, in effect, self-fulfilling prophecies.

"In this light, it is important that Kansans play a role in present efforts to create a consistent, dependable population projection. Once the proposals are made public next month, I would urge every local, county and state official to take a close look at the proposed methodology and its effect in Kansas, and make your views known to the Commerce Department. The formula could determine the future growth of our state."