

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 22, 1979

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DOLE CALLS FOR OVERSIGHT HEARINGS ON PILOT ENERGY PROGRAM

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today called on the Senate Agriculture Committee to hold oversight hearings to review the pilot energy project loan program established by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977.

"The hearings would serve several purposes," Dole said, "but my main concern is that we hear from those responsible for handling the Department of Agriculture's energy programs. The committee should call on Secretary Bergland and Dr. Weldon Barton, director of the USDA Energy Office, and others, to present their views on what opportunities are being made available in the energy field for the products of agriculture.

"We have seen in recent weeks that the Administration has not spoken with a clear voice. While President Carter was in Iowa telling farmers of the bright future for gasohol, Secretary Bergland was saying that it is not feasible to expect gasohol to compete effectively as an alternative fuel. Somewhere between these two opposing statements lies the truth in the Administration position. I would like to hear USDA's reasons for its pessimistic outlook on gasohol."

In a letter to Agriculture Committee Chairman Herman Talmadge, Dole said, "I have been concerned about the amount of time it has taken to implement the pilot project energy loans and about reports there are too many rules and regulations. Concerns have also been expressed to me about the apparently conflicting and somewhat negative reports being issued by the USDA concerning the use of agriculture products to produce alternative renewable fuels.

"A hearing on these subjects could help clarify for the record what the facts are. The energy policy of the USDA and their record of supporting pilot project energy loans is of concern to many of our farmers and agri-businessmen."

Earlier this month, the Agriculture Committee approved an extension of the pilot alternative energy loan program to allow up to \$180 million in loan guarantees. The extension was initiated by Sen. Dole for the purpose of enabling continued research into energy sources using agricultural products and by-products as components. Gasohol is one of the alternative energy sources that Dole hopes will benefit from increased research due to the program.