

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

2213 Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: BILL KATS
202-224-8947,

'NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO CUT AMTRAK SERVICE,' DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today gave his support to a one-year moratorium on changes in the Amtrak rail system, and continues to believe it would be the best approach despite its defeat today in the Senate 35-65.

"The proposed cuts in Amtrak rail passenger service are scheduled for the wrong time, and the cuts have been made in the wrong way," Dole said. "It just does not make sense to me to kill passenger trains that are running full almost every day and are experiencing the most dramatic increases of rail history, especially as our nation faces energy shortages that threaten to alter our transportation habits.

"This simply is not the time to cut service. Our country needs alternatives to the gas-guzzling automobiles. We talk of a massive development of synthetic fuels. We talk of increasing mass transportation. Yet, the train is about the only mass transit the rural areas of our country have. Hutchinson, Wichita and Garden City, Kansas, just do not have the facilities of New York and Washington, D.C.

"When Amtrak cuts were first announced, I must admit that I was leaning in favor of them. Kansas stood to lose two trains, but my first thoughts were that parochial concerns should not stand in the way of directing our tax monies where they were most needed. But while Amtrak lines may not all be moneymakers, few train systems in the world run at a profit. The moratorium would have cost about \$150 million more than the committee compromise. That is a small price to pay for this service.

"The proposed changes have been made in the wrong way, with an eye toward political payoffs and compromise so that this bill could be agreed to before the August recess. I agree that we must move quickly to give Amtrak direction for the coming year, but not at the price of a reasoned and rational approach to the problem."

A Dole amendment calling for a "rail bank" will be included in the final version of the Senate bill. The amendment ensures that no Amtrak track will be downgraded or eliminated until final determination on Amtrak is made.