

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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DOLE SAYS PUERTO RICAN SELF-DETERMINATION ESSENTIAL

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), in response to inquiries about his views on Puerto Rican commonwealth status, said today that "the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States is long overdue for a thorough evaluation and revision," and that "I will be committed to the fundamental principle of self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico, whatever the decision on their own political future is."

"Two weeks have passed since the marking of the 27th anniversary of the commonwealth status of Puerto Rico, and much has been written in newspapers about the future of Puerto Rico," he said. "I have received many inquiries from U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico and of Puerto Rican descent asking my views on our continuing mutual relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico.

"In the past 40 years, Puerto Rico has made energetic progress in its efforts at improving health, education and job opportunities for all of its 3.2 million citizens.

"I have personally been involved in several measures that have been important for Puerto Ricans. I joined with Senator George McGovern in 1977 to reform food stamp laws, eliminating the purchase requirement and making food stamps more convenient to obtain and use. Eighty to 85 percent of Puerto Ricans use food stamps, and my legislation eliminated the often difficult task of raising the money to buy the food stamps each month.

"I have worked to aid the elderly and disabled, and have urged that supplemental income programs be expanded for those people. Also, I am currently working to increase the ceiling on Medicaid expenditures to Puerto Rico for this year. Puerto Rico ranks 14th in terms of the number of men and women who have fought for this nation in this century. That is a fantastic figure, and we should not deny the weakest and those most deserving of aid in the Puerto Rican society of their fair and just coverage under supplemental aid programs.

"The relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States is long overdue for a thorough evaluation and revision. I was an original cosponsor of a resolution adopted by the Senate last week re-affirming the Congress's commitment to respect and support the right of the people of Puerto Rico to determine their own political future through peaceful, open and democratic processes. I am proud of my relationship with Puerto Rico, and am committed to honor the results of a plebiscite held in the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, whatever decision the people may make."