

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE CALLS FOR KANSAS VETERANS GERIATRICS CENTER

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.), in testimony today before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, asked the committee to seriously consider Kansas as a potential site for a geriatrics extended care center for veterans in one of the Kansas VA hospitals.

Dole made his request as part of a statement in support of S. 1523, the Veterans' Senior Citizens Health Care Act of 1979, which would recognize geriatrics care as a major concern of United States veterans, and would establish a system of geriatrics care units in VA hospitals across the country. The House voted recently to approve the bill 406-0.

"It would be a great service and benefit to the aging veterans in Kansas and the surrounding states to have at their disposal these facilities in one of the Kansas VA hospitals," Dole said. "My state has over 50,000 veterans, 60 years and older. In addition, because of its central location, our facilities also service veterans in the nearby states of Oklahoma, Nebraska, New Mexico, Missouri, Arkansas and Colorado. We have, at present, three VA hospitals -- in Wichita, Topeka and Leavenworth. They all have established nursing homes to begin addressing the needs of our senior citizens, and all are affiliated with an accredited university medical school. Leavenworth, 25 miles from the University of Kansas Medical School, and Wichita, with the University's branch in Wichita, work closely and in conjunction with these medical facilities.

"As we have been witnessing a continuous cut in veterans programs over the last few years, especially in the field of medical and health care, it is crucial that we not allow this initiative to fall by the wayside. Last year, the administration's budget cutting resulted in drastic cuts in medical personnel, equipment and additional facilities, causing a drastic deterioration in the quality of medical care in our VA medical facilities. And the trend seems to be continuing. Passage of this legislation would certainly be a worthy means of demonstrating our concern and gratitude to these most deserving men for their brave and selfless service to our country.

"Its adoption will mean longer, healthier and more independent lives for our veteran senior citizens, and, hopefully, will provide the catalyst for serving all members of society.

"In particular, the field of geriatric medicine is of special importance to our veteran population, as many of our veterans are approaching or members of the 60 and older age group."