

## News from Senator

# BOB DOLE



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### DOLE FOOD STAMP PROPOSAL BEFORE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE TODAY

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.), a senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today called upon the committee to accept the President's broad outline for spending reductions in the food stamp program designed to save an estimated \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 1982. Additionally, Dole urged approval of a package of alternative savings plans introduced yesterday by Senator Dole, along with Senators Mark Andrews and Patrick Leahy. The Dole proposal also contains legislation that would deal with the most frequently cited problems of fraud and abuse in the program.

"By voting for this legislation, we have a chance to make significant reductions in food stamp expenditures," Dole said today in committee mark-up. "If this program has grown to be an \$11-billion program in fiscal year 1981, it is because of inflation, unemployment, and the state of our economy in general. Although we might cut back on expenditures by trimming the edges of the program, I feel strongly that we should make every effort to avoid cutting benefits across-the-board. In order to address complaints about this program, we should go after the fraud and abuse that exists and not resort to reductions in benefits that exceed even the President's budget goals concerning this program.

"The President has recommended that this program be cut back by about \$1.5 billion for fiscal year 1982 (the amount contained in the Senate-passed budget resolution). I think that we should agree with the President's level of cuts, although we may differ on the specifics here in this committee. This figure represents a fair share of the overall sacrifice to be made by just about all federal programs in existence.

"Let me make it clear that I am supporting the President's approach on food stamps. I believe the Administration has done an outstanding job in its preparation of comprehensive legislation to re-authorize the food stamp program. I am in complete agreement with the vast majority of the provisions in the Administration's bill, and I will support most of the savings proposals it includes. However, there are a few areas where I think savings can be achieved in ways which would have a less harmful effect on low-income families.

"Yesterday, along with Senators Andrews and Leahy, I introduced a package of amendments to the Administration's bill that is designed to achieve the same budget goals by an alternate route. I would add that my approach is entirely consistent with the food stamp position of the National Governors' Association. The governors agree with me that there should be no reduction in food stamp benefits due to school lunch participation. They oppose placing a permanent freeze on the standard and shelter deductions, and they agree that the food stamp 'cap' should be eliminated, saying that 'the inevitable effect of the food stamp "cap" is chaos for state administering agencies, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and recipients.'

"It is my understanding that Secretary Block sent a letter to the House yesterday, saying that the Administration is in favor of our approach on freezing deductions and later providing for more realistic CPI adjustments. I also think that the approach we have taken to Puerto Rico is a reasonable one -- we revise the eligibility criteria to make it more in line with mainland poverty guidelines (about 55 percent of the mainland), in order to achieve significant savings without having to resort to implementation of a block grant for fiscal year 1982.

"I am also confident that the Administration will support our efforts to assure that all federal programs receive cost-of-living increases at the same time. This major adjustment will lead to administrative convenience, as well as less confusion on the part of recipients over benefit levels. The economic circumstances of the times demand a redress of our entire economy, and my package includes significant benefit reductions as well as many provisions to ensure that benefits are targeted to those low-income Americans who are most in need of federal assistance. As we are dealing with the President's economic package here in the Congress these days, I would like to make a recommendation that the Administration bill be used as the basis for our mark-up session, and that individual senators make modifications to the President's proposals as the opportunity presents itself."