

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE MARKUP OF S. 951

WASHINGTON --

We're here today to address a temporary problem which affects millions of people in this country--the loss of health insurance due to prolonged unemployment. As I have said before, this is not a new problem, but simply one that has been exacerbated by economic conditions.

Our discussions on how best to address this issue began some months ago. There has been a great deal of interest on the part of many, as demonstrated by the number of proposals pending before both the House and the Senate.

As many of you know, Senators Heinz, Specter, and Durenberger were among the earliest supporters of efforts to solve the problems of the unemployed. The proposal we have before us today is in large part the result of their efforts and those of many others, including Senator Riegle.

The proposal my colleagues and I have offered, S. 951, is intended to be a limited and temporary approach to this problem by providing some protection to those individuals who are not able to finance the purchase of private coverage during a period of unemployment and have no other health insurance coverage available to them. It is not a bill to create national health insurance, or to address the needs of every individual who does not currently have health care coverage. Some, including

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the House Ways and Means Committee, have suggested we spend more money, while others, including the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, have suggested the creation of a new title of an existing Act.

What we have strived for is a time-limited, financially-limited, proposal that creates a narrow Federal role in helping these people through a difficult time, and also makes use of the best aspects of the private sector. Most importantly, I want to make absolutely sure that we don't contribute to our bloated Federal deficit by enacting this program without comparable revenue increases or spending cuts.

At some point this Committee needs to decide how to either raise \$1.8 billion in revenues during the period when this program is in effect, or else come up with an additional \$1.8 billion in spending reductions in that time. I am steadfastly committed to making financing a contingency for the enactment of the legislation we are marking up today.

I am hopeful that the Committee will be able to reach agreement on a proposal, and a way to finance it. A real need exists. This is a first step toward addressing that need.