

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1983

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DOLE CALLS FOR WOMEN'S EQUITY IN SOCIAL SECURITY --
SENATOR URGES REFORM BEFORE HOUSE TASK FORCE

WASHINGTON -- Senate Finance Committee Chairman Bob Dole (R-Kansas), whose committee has jurisdiction over Social Security, today urged a House Task Force on Social Security and Women to support the changes necessary to correct gender imbalances in the nation's 48-year-old retirement program.

"Increasingly, the treatment of women under social security is becoming a focus of public attention. And no wonder! The basic structure of the system, whereby benefits are paid to workers upon retirement and to their wives and widows as presumed dependents, was established nearly a half century ago," Dole said.

As a key member of President Reagan's National Commission on Social Security Reform, the Kansas Senator played a major role in rescuing the financially troubled Social Security System. Dole later successfully steered the Social Security reform package through his Finance Committee and the full Senate before it was signed into law by the President.

"Some legislative headway, albeit limited, was made in the recently enacted financing bill, the Social Security Amendments of 1983," Dole told the task force. "In that bill, benefit adequacy was improved for widows, divorced wives and disabled widows, as recommended by the National Commission on Social Security Reform. A number of us on the National Commission would have liked to have gone further in these areas, but it was generally agreed that the urgency and enormity of the financing problem made that impossible in the limited time available. It is worth noting, I believe, that the need to limit the bill to only the four changes we recommended was supported by the two women on the National Commission, Martha Keys, Congresswoman from Kansas, and Mary Falvey Fuller."

"There may be some who hold the view that when Congress acted to shore up the financing of the ailing retirement system, the job of social security reform was complete, but as this hearing will surely highlight -- at least in the area of women's equity -- the job has just begun," Dole said.

"The headway made in the Social Security Amendments Act of 1983 was necessarily limited. More comprehensive reform proposals, such as those introduced by the chair of this task force, now warrant careful consideration," Dole said. "The adequacy of benefits for divorced and widowed spouses, the equity of benefits for two-earner couples, and the financial viability of the system under various reform proposals must each be assessed.

"Women are now an important part of the paid work force at the same time they are an important source of economic security for their families and for themselves. It should come as no surprise that there is broad support for critically reexamining the impact of the social security system on women -- whether as homemakers, as employees, or as both -- and for taking legislative action where necessary to remedy inequities and inadequacies," Dole concluded.