

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO REVIEW THE NEED FOR CHANGES TO THE STANDING RULES OF THE SENATE. I APPRECIATE BOTH THE DISTINGUISHED CHAIRMAN AND THE DISTINGUISHED RANKING MEMBER TAKING THE TIME AT THIS EARLY DATE TO HOLD THESE HEARINGS SO THAT WE CAN GET OFF TO A FAST START IN ADDRESSING ANY RULES CHANGES THAT SHOULD BE PUT IN PLACE FOR THE 99TH CONGRESS.

WITH REFERENCE TO RECOMMENDATIONS PENDING REGARDING COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS, LET ME JUST STATE THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES HAS TENTATIVELY AGREED TO LIMIT THE OVERALL NUMBER OF "A" COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS TO 204--210 OVERALL. WE HAVE ALSO ENTERTAINED A RECOMMENDATION THAT EACH SENATOR BE RESTRICTED TO TWO "A" COMMITTEES AND ONE "B" COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING THE "A" COMMITTEES THAT SENATORS MUST RELINQUISH IN ORDER TO ADHERE TO RULE 25 AND BEGIN THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES "A" SELECTION PROCESS.

THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES WILL MEET AT 11:00 A.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 1985, AND 11:00 A.M., ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 1985, TO DISCUSS AND RECOMMEND TO THE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE ANY OR ALL OF THE AFOREMENTIONED.

THE NEED FOR REFORM

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A GROWING BELIEF ON THE PART OF MANY MEMBERS THAT THE CURRENT SENATE RULES AND PROCEDURES ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE SENATE. IN MANY RESPECTS, THE SENATE AS AN INSTITUTION SEEMS TO BE BREAKING DOWN, AS EVIDENCED BY THE FOLLOWING:

- THE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES IN MANY CASES ARE WITHERING ON THE VINE AS THEY ARE INCREASINGLY UNABLE TO GET AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEBATE THEIR AUTHORIZATION BILLS. INSTEAD THEY FIND OTHERS, THROUGH AMENDMENTS TO THE APPROPRIATIONS BILLS, ATTEMPTING TO MAKE LEGISLATIVE DECISIONS FOR THEM.

- ROUTINELY, DEBATE ON BILLS IS SIDETRACKED FOR HOURS AND EVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF NONBINDING SENSE OF THE SENATE AMENDMENTS ON SUBJECTS IRRELEVANT TO THE MEASURE BEFORE THE SENATE.
- BECAUSE OF LOG JAMS OF ESSENTIAL LEGISLATION, THE SENATE SEEMS TO BE MORE OFTEN RESORTING TO CLOTURE, BUT CLOTURE SEEMS TO BE AN INEFFECTIVE TOOL IN GETTING THE BULK OF THE SENATE'S BUSINESS DONE.
- THE SENATE HAS FREQUENTLY AND CASUALLY OVERRULED THE CHAIR-- NOT ON BORDERLINE JUDGMENT CALLS--BUT IN INSTANCES WHERE THE CHAIR WAS PLAINLY CORRECT. IN CONTRAST, I DO NOT BELIEVE THE HOUSE HAS VOTED TO OVERRULE THE CHAIR DURING MY ENTIRE CAREER IN WASHINGTON.

THESE EXAMPLES ARE JUST SYMPTOMATIC OF THE NEED FOR SOME MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO THE SENATE RULES. IN RESPONSE THERE HAVE BEEN TWO MAJOR STUDIES OF THESE PROBLEMS--THE PEARSON/RIBICOFF REPORT AND THE QUAYLE COMMITTEE REPORT, WHICH CONTAINED A VARIETY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM OF THE SENATE RULES AND MODE OF OPERATION. IN ADDITION, A NUMBER OF MEMBERS HAVE INTRODUCED A NUMBER OF VERY THOUGHTFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR RULES REFORM.

THE AD HOC COMMITTEES

IN AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE CAN GET ANY CONSENSUS FOR PROMPT ACTION, I ASKED SENATOR CHAFEE TO APPOINT AN AD HOC COMMITTEE OF REPUBLICAN MEMBERS TO REVIEW ALL OF THE OUTSTANDING SUGGESTIONS FOR RULE CHANGES. THAT AD HOC COMMITTEE WILL BE CHAIRED BY SENATOR GORTON AND WILL INCLUDE SENATORS MATHIAS, HELMS, AND QUAYLE.

I WOULD HOPE THAT SENATOR BYRD WOULD APPOINT A SIMILAR AD HOC COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT A SIMILAR REVIEW. IT IS MY HOPE THAT A CONSENSUS MIGHT EMERGE FROM THESE AD HOC COMMITTEES AS TO RULES CHANGES THAT MIGHT BE IMPLEMENTED QUICKLY BEFORE THIS MONTH IS OUT. THESE COMMITTEES MIGHT ALSO IDENTIFY OTHER CHANGES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FURTHER UPON WHICH THEY WERE UNABLE TO REACH CONSENSUS, BUT WORTHY OF DEBATE AND DISPOSITION.

MOTION TO PROCEED

I COULD SUPPORT A NUMBER OF THE RULES CHANGES RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT I HAVE SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT OTHERS. THERE IS ONE RULE CHANGE IN PARTICULAR THAT AS MAJORITY LEADER I WOULD LIKE TO SEE ADOPTED.

IN MY VIEW, ALL MOTIONS TO PROCEED SHOULD BE NONDEBATABLE OR LIMITED TO A ONE OR TWO HOUR DEBATE EQUALLY DIVIDED.

UNDER THE CURRENT RULES, MOTIONS TO PROCEED ARE NONDEBATABLE IF THEY ARE MADE IN THE MORNING HOUR, OR IF THE MOTION IS TO PROCEED TO A PRIVILEGED MATTER OR TO A MATTER ON THE EXECUTIVE CALANDAR. RATHER THAN MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN MOTIONS TO PROCEED ON A LEGISLATIVE MATTER OUTSIDE THE MORNING HOUR AND ALL OTHER MOTIONS TO PROCEED, A UNIFORM NONDEBATABLE OR TIME LIMITED DEBATE MOTION TO PROCEED SHOULD BE ADOPTED.

THIS RULE CHANGE WOULD PERMIT THE LEADERSHIP TO MORE EFFECTIVELY SET THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA OF THE SENATE. THE MINORITY ON ANY PARTICULAR MATTER CAN STILL PROTECT ITS RIGHTS BY FILIBUSTERING THE BILL OR ANY AMENDMENT IT FINDS OBJECTIONABLE. TWO LAYERS OF FILIBUSTER AND TWO CLOTURE VOTES SHOULD NOT BE REQUIRED. IN MY VIEW, THE MAJORITY LEADER OUGHT TO BE GIVEN BY THE RULES THE NONDEBATABLE POWER TO PROCEED TO LEGISLATION.

ANOTHER AREA OF CONCERN TO ME IS THE GERMANENESS ISSUE, WHICH MANY OTHERS HAVE TRIED--WITHOUT SUCCESS--TO RESOLVE. RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO INITIATE ANY CHANGES IN THE STANDING RULES OF THE SENATE--WHICH IS PROBABLY UNLIKELY--IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS PROBLEM CAN BEST BE ADDRESSED BY AN AGREEMENT REACHED BY THE MAJORITY LEADER, THE MINORITY LEADER, THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER. SHOULD THEY CONCLUDE THAT THE AMENDMENT IS NON-GERMANE, WE WOULD SIMPLY MOVE TO TABLE THE AMENDMENT.