

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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CONGRESS REVISES HELSINKI COMMISSION

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) announced today that Congress has cleared legislation amending the 1976 act creating the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe -- the so-called Helsinki Commission.

"With passage of this bill, Congress has finally structured the Commission so that it will be effective and reflect equal concern by the Senate and the House over human rights," Dole said.

The bill would change the original legislation in three important ways:

- It authorizes the rotation of the chairmanship of the Commission between the Senate and the House. According to the new schedule, the Senate will have the chair for each odd-numbered Congress, the House for each even-numbered Congress. Under this arrangement, the Senate will chair the Commission starting this year.
- It expands the members of the Commission by four, two each from the Senate and the House, in order to demonstrate the growing attention Congress is paying to the issues addressed in the Helsinki accord.
- It establishes in law that one of the most important aspects of the Commission's work is its examination of human rights developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

This legislation was developed with the help of Dante Fascell (D-Fla.), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"The Helsinki Commission can now get down to the work it was established to do," Dole said. "When we tried to reform the Commission last year, there were some inaccurate media reports concerning our efforts, so let's set the record straight: the reform legislation will expand the Commission, rotate the chair, and not cost the taxpayers an extra penny," Dole said.