

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, March 23, 1987

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DOLE TELLS OF KANSAS' FIRST EFFORT FOR ADMISSION INTO UNION

Washington DC -- Today marks the 129th anniversary of Kansas' first attempt at joining the Union, according to Senator Bob Dole (R-KS), who described the effort during a "Bicentennial Minute" speech on the Senate floor.

"On March 23, 1858, the Senate voted to admit the state of Kansas to the Union under the terms of the Lecompton constitution," said Sen. Dole. "This vote had been preceded by two years of the most bitter debates the Senate had yet witnessed. Charles Sumner's stinging speech (later entitled "The Crime Against Kansas") and his caning at the hands of Rep. Preston Brooks in 1856, served as a preface to this important day and vote.

"At issue was the extension of slavery into Kansas. pro-slavery forces, meeting in Lecompton, Kansas, had drawn up a constitution permitting slavery. And President Buchanan, anxious to placate the South, recommended that Kansas be admitted to the Union with the Lecompton constitution. Enraged by what he regarded as Buchanan's betrayal, Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois led a revolt of northern Democrats who supported the free-state partisans and opposed the extension of slavery.

"Douglas threw himself into the senate debates over Kansas. At seven o'clock on the evening of March 22, as a "prodigious multitude" crowded the old Senate chamber, he appeared on the floor to make his final speech against the Lecompton bill. Douglas spoke for three hours, but to no avail. The next day, March 23, when the decks were cleared for final action on the bill, 33 senators upheld the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton constitution, 22 opposed it.

"The House refused to comply and the issue of Kansas remained alive for three more years. Not until January 1861, after the south had seceded, was Kansas finally admitted, slave-free, to the Union, becoming the 34th state," said Dole.

Lecompton is located in what is today known as Douglas County, named for the Illinois senator who opposed the constitution born there and never accepted by the full Congress.