

News from Senator

# BOB DOLE



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## DOLE WANTS USGA RULES TO ACCOMMODATE DISABLED GOLFERS

Washington, D.C. -- Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-KS), an advocate of rights for disabled individuals, has sent a telegram to the United States Golf Association (USGA) encouraging a rules change to accommodate disabled golfers in USGA-sanctioned tournaments.

The text of the telegram to William Williams, president of the USGA, is as follows:

"As an advocate of rights for disabled individuals, I am taking this opportunity to encourage the United States Golf Association to propose and adopt a rules change which would allow the use of carts without penalty by disabled golfers participating in U.S.G.A.-sanctioned tournaments.

"Under U.S.G.A. rules, disabled golfers who use carts between shots are apparently penalized at the rate of two strokes-per hole in tournament play, thus effectively disqualifying those disabled golfers from competition altogether. It is my understanding that the cart rule is generally not in effect on the increasingly popular Seniors Tour, but that it will be applicable in the U.S. Seniors Open Championship to be held this week.

"As you are well aware, this rule effectively prohibits Charles Owens and other disabled golfers from competing. While golf purists may argue that this should be the result, in my view is inconsistent with the notion of an "Open" tournament, Seniors or otherwise.

"As a fan who has watched many tournaments, it appears to me that golf is primarily a matter of shot-making (what kind of shot a golfer hits once he or she addresses the ball) rather than how a golfer moves around the course. And while I agree that a golfer who does walk the course experiences fatigue, surely you will agree that a disabled individual experiences disproportionately more fatigue walking even shorter distances. Thus I fail to understand what advantage a disabled golfer who uses a cart between shots attains over an able-bodied golfer who walks a course.

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"The game of golf has a rich heritage, and is universally popular in large measure because it stresses fair play. There is no better time than now, as the public recognizes the rights of the disabled and welcomes them into the mainstream of our society, for the U.S.G.A. to embrace compassion and common sense. I urge you to eliminate the discrimination against disabled golfers who require a cart to compete in sanctioned tournaments by adopting such a rules change."

Charles Owens, 57, is a veteran who suffered disabling injuries when making a parachute jump more than 30 years ago. In 1981 he began his golf career and has earned nearly \$250,000 on the PGA-sponsored Senior Tour (where the use of a cart is permitted without penalty).

Mr. Owens intends to compete (without the use of a cart) in the USGA-sponsored 1987 Senior Open scheduled to begin Thursday, July 9, in Fairfield, Connecticut.

Sen. Dole, upon learning of Mr. Owens' predicament, felt the USGA rules place Mr. Owens at an unfair disadvantage and in general discriminate against disabled golfers. The result of Sen. Dole's review of this issue is the above telegram to the USGA.