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REVITALIZING RURAL AMERICA, BALANCING THE FEDERAL BUDGET TOP  
DOLE AGENDA AS 101ST CONGRESS OPENS LEGISLATIVE SEASON:  
RURAL HOSPITALS AND SOCIAL SECURITY RECIPIENTS GET NEEDED BOOST

WASHINGTON -- SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE OPENED THE 1989 SENATE LEGISLATIVE SEASON WITH BILLS DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN QUALITY HEALTH CARE IN RURAL AMERICA AND TO FREE SENIOR CITIZENS FROM SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS LIMITATIONS.

THE KANSAS SENATOR ALSO INTRODUCED LEGISLATION CALLING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION THAT WOULD REQUIRE A BALANCED BUDGET FROM CONGRESS.

"SLASHING FEDERAL DEFICITS, BALANCING THE BUDGET AND CONTINUING ECONOMIC EXPANSION IS STILL THE BEST PRESCRIPTION FOR A HEALTHIER RURAL AMERICA," DOLE SAID. "IN THE MEANTIME, WE HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN RURAL AMERICA DOESN'T LAG BEHIND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY ON ANY FRONT; ESPECIALLY HEALTH CARE. THAT'S WHY I AM CALLING FOR A SPECIAL SAFETY NET FOR OUR RURAL HOSPITALS BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR FOR LACK OF FUNDS."

RURAL HOSPITAL EQUITY ACT

POINTING OUT THAT 188 RURAL HOSPITALS HAVE CLOSED DOWN DURING THE PAST SIX YEARS, DOLE SAID HIS 'RURAL HOSPITAL EQUITY ACT' WOULD REFORM CURRENT MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT REGULATIONS WHICH NOW CREATE FINANCIAL SHORTFALLS FOR SMALL HOSPITALS.

THE DOLE BILL HELPS RURAL FACILITIES PROVIDE QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES BY BOOSTING AID TO HOSPITALS WITH 100 OR FEWER BEDS AND WHOSE MEDICARE PATIENTS ACCOUNT FOR 70 PERCENT OF THEIR DISCHARGES.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

SENATOR DOLE ALSO INTRODUCED LEGISLATION THAT WILL PHASE OUT EARNINGS LIMITATIONS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY RECIPIENTS OVER 65. THESE LIMITATIONS NOW PREVENT MILLIONS OF SENIOR CITIZENS FROM RECEIVING THEIR FULL BENEFITS. THE FIVE-YEAR PHASE-OUT WOULD BEGIN IN 1990.

"OUR ELDERLY HAVE PAID THEIR DUES THROUGH A LIFETIME OF HARD WORK AND THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO RECEIVE FULL BENEFITS," DOLE SAID.

BALANCE THE BUDGET

THE SENATE LEADER CONTINUED HIS FIGHT FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT BY INTRODUCING A BILL CALLING FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO BALANCE THE BUDGET.

"IF CONGRESS CAN'T ENFORCE ITSELF, THEN THE CONSTITUTION OUGHT TO MAKE THE HOUSE AND SENATE TOE THE LINE ON SPENDING AND TAXES," DOLE SAID. "THE FEDERAL DEFICIT IS STILL THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE ON THE NATIONAL AGENDA AND I'LL BE WORKING WITH PRESIDENT BUSH TO TAKE QUICK AND DECISIVE ACTION ON THE DEFICIT FRONT."

NOTE: SENATOR DOLE INTRODUCED A TOTAL OF SEVEN BILLS ON JANUARY 25TH. A SUMMARY OF THOSE NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE IS ON THE BACK OF THIS RELEASE.