

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

**DOLE SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT;
STRONG PAST CIVIL RIGHTS RECORD DOESN'T DISQUALIFY HIM
FROM RAISING LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS ABOUT
EFFECTIVENESS & FAIRNESS OF PROGRAMS**

An article appeared in today's Washington Post with the catchy, but entirely misleading, headline "Dole Takes 180-degree Turn On Affirmative Action."

I would like to take a few moments now to set the record straight.

If affirmative action means remedying proven past discrimination against individuals, then I'm all for it.

If affirmative action means recruitment of qualified minorities and women to give them an opportunity to compete, without guaranteeing the results of the competition, then I'm for that too.

But if affirmative action means quotas, set-asides, and other preferences that favor individuals simply because they happen to belong to certain groups, then that's where I draw the line.

Of course, those who discriminate ought to be punished, and those individuals who are the victims of discrimination ought to be made whole. But you don't fix one problem by creating another. You don't cure discrimination with more discrimination. As I said when the Senate unanimously adopted the amendment that created the Glass Ceiling Commission: "There is no right or correct number...and my opposition to quotas could not be stronger or more deeply felt."

I'm proud of my civil rights record and I have never shied away from it. I supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Americans with Disabilities Act. The compromise leading to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

However, my past record on civil rights does not, and should not, disqualify me from raising legitimate questions about the continuing effectiveness and fairness of "affirmative action," particularly when the affirmative-action label is used to describe quotas, set-asides and other preferences. In fact, it was precisely because of these questions that I asked the Congressional Research Service last December to prepare a list of all federal preference laws and regulations.

And, after all, even President Clinton and the Chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council are raising these same questions.

They understand, as I do, that no federal program is writ in stone. And no federal policy should be immune from congressional scrutiny.

This has been my position in the past. It is my position now. And it will be my position in the future.

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