

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, May 5, 1995

Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

LEGAL REFORM

DOLE REBUTS PRESIDENT CLINTON'S ATTACK ON LEGAL REFORM - SCARE TACTICS WILL FAIL IN END; MAJORITY OF AMERICAN PEOPLE & SENATE WANT REFORM

As we continue the legal reform debate, I think it is important to take a few minutes and focus on what is and is not at stake here.

What is at stake is whether we are going to continue with a legal system that is too costly, too long, and too unfair. What is at stake is whether the powerful trial lawyers lobby will continue to protect their privileges through irresponsible scare tactics.

Opponents of Legal Reform Twisting Truth

Because let's be clear. The last week has demonstrated not only that the American people -- over 83% -- want reform; a majority of the Senate wants reform too.

Only President Clinton and his trial lawyer allies defend the status quo.

What they won't do, however, is engage in a debate on the merits. I was disappointed to see President Clinton parrot the standard trial lawyer line that legal reform protected "drunk drivers, murderers, rapists and abusers of women and children."

I've been here a while, but I must say that I rarely have seen such an offensive twisting of the truth. President Clinton knows better and he should be ashamed of engaging in such tactics.

Legal Reforms Focus on Civil - Not Criminal - Code

The truth is that we have state and federal criminal codes to deal with these people. The real irony that is apparently lost on President Clinton is that those same criminal codes generally contain -- in addition to prison terms -- fines and penalties that are typically \$5000 or \$10000 for serious felonies.

Those criminal fines are only a very small fraction of the multi-million dollar punitive damage award. So why isn't President Clinton attacking the criminal code for "protecting" criminals? Why haven't his crime proposals ever addressed this issue?

Because this is about politics, not policy. Our legal reforms focus on the civil code, not the criminal code. President Clinton knows that.

Trial Lawyers & Campaign Influence

But President Clinton also knows who raised millions of dollars for him in 1992 -- the trial lawyers. And he knows who raised 25 million dollars for Democrat House and Senate candidates between 1989 and 1994 -- the trial lawyers.

Think about that. There is a lot talk of special interests in this town, but no single-issue group comes anywhere close to bringing this much money to bear on federal campaigns. And no other group is so generous and so exclusively for the party of President Clinton.

So, despite the evidence that there is bi-partisan support for these reforms -- and expanding them so that every American can benefit -- when the chips were down, the trial lawyers and President Clinton started trying to scare people.

And yesterday, that tactic worked. Only two Democrats voted for reform.

Scare Tactics Will Ultimately Fail

But this tactic will fail in the end. I am proud that we are trying to pass legal reform that benefits as many Americans as possible. I will continue to work for reforms that help small businesses, and volunteer and charitable organizations.

(more)

I believe the American people see past the irresponsible rhetoric. They know we are continuing to fight for their interests.

But the reality is that we cannot bring this debate to a close without bi-partisan support. 45 Republicans did their part. Reform won't happen unless the Democrats put the interests of the American people ahead of the interests of the trial lawyers and their huge financial stake in the Democrat party.

I plan to bring this bill to a vote again on Monday or Tuesday. The American people need and deserve these reforms, and I for one do not intend to allow scare tactics to deter us from our responsibility to pass a legal reform bill.

###