

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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VETERANS & THE BUDGET

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate today approved a Sense of the Senate amendment introduced by Kansas Senator Bob Dole which urges Congress to consider carefully a package of budget recommendations put forth by a coalition of veterans groups. Senator Dole's remarks follow:

Over the past few days, some have argued that the budget resolution before us is mean-spirited in its treatment of veterans -- that it doesn't take into consideration the real needs of those who served and sacrificed on behalf of our country. Well, I would like to set the record straight on this matter.

Before the White House or those on the other side of the aisle start attacking Republicans on this issue, they had better take a hard look at the Congressional Budget Office's re-estimate of the President's Fiscal Year 1996 budget request. Over five years, the President's own budget gives the Department of Veterans Affairs \$339 million less for discretionary medical spending than it would receive under a hard freeze.

However, a coalition of veterans' groups has put together a plan called the Independent Budget for Veterans Affairs: Fiscal Year 1996. The coalition claims that the recommendations set forth in the this document will help to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system while saving taxpayer dollars. The coalition -- which includes AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars -- submitted its plan to Congress and to the Clinton Administration earlier this year.

The amendment I offer today simply states that Congress should give this proposal careful consideration. It is a non-partisan document, crafted by the people who know the system best -- the veterans themselves. Let us consider their expertise and rise above the rhetoric as we work to improve the efficiency and quality of service to veterans.

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