

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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ANTI-TERRORISM BILL

CLOSING STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

Immediately after the Oklahoma City tragedy, President Clinton was right on target when he said that the perpetrators of this vicious crime should face justice that was "swift, certain, and severe."

I am pleased to report to the American people and to the President that, with today's passage of the anti-terrorism bill, we are one giant step closer to achieving this important goal.

The most critical element of this bill, and the one that bears most directly on the tragic events in Oklahoma City, is the provision reforming the so-called habeas corpus rules.

By imposing filing deadlines on all death row inmates, and by limiting condemned killers convicted in state or federal court to one federal habeas petition--one bite of the apple--these landmark reforms will go a long, long way to streamline the lengthy appeals process and bridge the gap between crime and punishment in America.

It is dead wrong that we must wait eight, or nine, or even ten years before a capital sentence is actually carried out. And, of course, it is terribly unjust to the innocent victims of violent crime and their families.

As I said yesterday, if the federal government prosecutes the Oklahoma City case and the death penalty is sought and imposed, the execution of the sentence could take as a little as one year once these reforms are enacted into law.

I want to thank President Clinton for his efforts this past week in discouraging Democratic amendments. No doubt about it, the President's involvement has helped speed up the process here in the Senate. I particularly commend the President for finally coming around to the view that habeas reform is an essential ingredient of any serious anti-terrorism plan.

I want to thank the two managers, Senator Hatch and Senator Biden, for their persistence in guiding this legislation through the Senate. On this side of aisle, Senator Hatch has provided the intellectual glue that has kept this effort together. And, of course, I want to thank my two colleagues from Oklahoma, Senator Nickles and Senator Inhofe, whose help in this process has also been invaluable.

Finally, I commend the good people of Oklahoma City, whose self-sacrifice and resiliency during this very difficult time has been an inspiration for us all. The families of some of the bombing victims travelled all the way to Washington this past Monday to let us know that we must take action now to put an end to the endless delays and appeals that have done so much to weaken public confidence in our system of criminal justice. It is gratifying to see that their efforts have had such a profound impact here in the Senate.

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