

**Statement of Senator Bob Dole
Introducing HHS Secretary-Designate Kathleen Sebelius
Senate Finance Committee
April 2, 2009**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Grassley, and Members of the Committee.

It is my honor to accompany and introduce before this Committee on which I served my friend and fellow Kansan, Governor Kathleen Sebelius.

I know the Sebelius family very well, and have for many years – Keith and Betty (both deceased), their son Gary, and grandsons Ned and John. I served in the House with Kathleen’s father, John Gilligan, in the 1960s. Her father-in-law, Keith, was elected to my seat in the House when I came to the Senate.

As you know this Committee will play a critical role in reforming the nation’s health care system which in many areas is in a state of crisis. The Committee has a tremendous responsibility when it comes to this nominee and determining her qualifications. I believe Governor Sebelius had a good, solid hearing with the Senate HELP Committee on Tuesday, demonstrating clearly why the President has chosen her to be Secretary of HHS at this important time.

Having been around the process a long while, I have the sense the time has come for real, constructive action on health care. The American people and Congress seem ready to address the uninsured and the spiraling costs associated with care. I’ve learned this from working on health care reform with a group called the Bipartisan Policy Center, along with former leaders Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, and George Mitchell. We hope to make meaningful recommendations that could be helpful to this Committee and Congress.

We have a nominee who understands bipartisanship is best in the long run, even though with the big Democratic majority many Republicans may not be needed. Nonetheless, it was my experience that a nonpartisan, or a bipartisan, approach will stand the test of time much better.

Over 30 years ago, in 1977, I sponsored the bill which passed 99-0 to name the Department of Health and Human Services Building, then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Hubert H. Humphrey Building. The name on that building should remind us that the position of Secretary of HHS was initiated by a unanimous bipartisan vote.

For more than twenty years, Kathleen Sebelius has served the state of Kansas as a legislator, insurance commissioner and Governor. All of her accomplishments required bipartisan approaches. Her work has earned her the respect of Democrats and Republicans, including our former colleague, Nancy Kassebaum Baker, who had written to Members of the HELP Committee and if there is no objection I would ask to include that letter as part of the record.

Governor Sebelius and I are from different parties. We have different views on different issues, some highly controversial. But that is not the issue here today. Candidate Obama is now President Obama and gets to make the cabinet selections. He has determined that she is well qualified and that she understands the importance of the enormous task before her when confirmed by the entire Senate. I agree and that's why I am here to support her nomination. We need a Secretary of HHS who has the skills, experience and courage to shape and guide this historic legislation through Congress. It will not be easy but I know Governor Sebelius will never stop trying.

The bottom line is that the position of Secretary of Health and Human Services has never been more important as it appears Congress will "bite the bullet" and attempt to find a solution to a real problem that affects real people who cannot acquire adequate, accessible and affordable health care for a number of reasons, primarily lack of resources.

The sixty-four-thousand dollar question is: Can we forge a bipartisan proposal that is accessible, available, and affordable? We can with steady and determined leadership and Governor Sebelius is ready to lead us in that direction.

I look forward to watching the health care proposal's progress and I am willing personally to assist in any way I can. Thanks again to the Members of the Committee and my best to the President's nominee.