



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

Robert J. Dole (1923 – Present)

Bob Dole is one of the most prominent civic leaders in Kansas history. From his days in the House and the Senate through his run for the presidency, Dole has proven himself an enduring Republican leader.

Robert Joseph Dole was born in Russell, Kan., in 1923, the second of four children. The Dole family worked hard and lived modestly. When the Great Depression hit, the Dole's rented out their home to help make ends meet. Dole held various jobs in his youth and was an athlete in high school, playing on the football and basketball teams.

For college, Dole attended the University of Kansas initially. After his sophomore year, he joined the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corp and became a second lieutenant in the Army's 10th Mountain Division during World War II. Dole's service concluded after five and a half years when he was wounded on a battlefield in northern Italy. He received two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star Medal for his heroic efforts.

Dole underwent extensive therapy to recover from his injuries back in the United States. He realized that his dream of becoming a doctor was out of reach and decided to become a lawyer. He received his law degree from Washburn University in 1952, but was elected two years earlier to the state legislature. His political involvement was just beginning and would become Dole's true passion and life's work.

Just after receiving his degree, Dole announced his candidacy for Russell County Attorney. He served four terms in this position and then decided to run for Congress. Dole was elected for four consecutive terms to the House of Representatives before being elected to the Senate in 1968.

Dole became a strong proponent of public service and dedicated himself to his service and the Republican Party's efforts. In 1971, Dole was asked by President Richard Nixon to serve as Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Despite the Watergate scandal and pressures on the party, Dole maintained an unwavering commitment to serving his people and the president. Due to his strong record in the Senate, Dole was chosen as President Gerald Ford's running mate in the presidential election of 1976.

Although Ford and Dole did not win the election, Dole continued to serve in the Senate, becoming elected Senate Majority Leader in 1984. Dole remained at the forefront of his party for the next 12 years, serving as Senate Minority Leader and returning to his position as Senate Majority Leader in 1994 during the Clinton Administration.

In 1996, Dole decided to take his political experience and successes and run for president. After Dole won the Republican primary, he retired from the Senate having served more years as leader of his party than any Republican in the history of the party. Although Dole was defeated by incumbent President Bill Clinton, his civil service was not forgotten. Clinton presented Dole with the Presidential Medal of Freedom to commend him for his significant contributions to America and American values.

