

Dole not done yet

J-W Editorial August 6, 2008

In the midst of another political season, a visit from a former Kansas senator is a timely reminder of the value of public service.

At age 85, former Sen. Bob Dole could write the book on active aging. The former Kansas senator was back in Lawrence on Monday to oversee a discussion on behalf of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Leadership Project on Health Care. The venue was the Dole Institute of Politics, a facility that not only honors Dole's life and political career but strives to inspire others to follow his example of public service.

It's a pretty tall order.

Dole keeps a schedule that would beat down a man half his age. He lent his name to Monday's proceedings but his appearance was no cameo. He was there for the whole afternoon. He came to listen and learn and will share his findings with former Sens. George Mitchell, Howard Baker and Tom Daschle in an effort to set a direction for reforming the U.S. health care system.

At a reception at the end of the day, he saw old friends who supported him and his political career for decades. He hadn't lost his politician's ability to work a room and share a smile. Although his sense of humor gave him some trouble with the news media during his national campaigns, Kansans seem to have no problem getting the joke.

With a primary election just over and another national presidential campaign well under way, Dole is a walking reminder of what politics and public service should be about. His self-deprecating sense of humor, his work ethic and his ability to put progress before politics made him a natural leader in Washington. Unfortunately, his kind of leadership is conspicuously lacking in Washington today.

Throughout his career Dole always has represented Kansas well. Dole displays a modest integrity that Kansans can respect even when they disagree with his policies or opinions.

Although the Dole Institute of Politics is all about passing the political torch to future generations, the energetic former senator still is carrying that torch high. The goal of the Dole Institute is to promote politics and public service as an honorable pursuit, and it's great to have Dole still leading the way.