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PRESS RELEASE

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Dole Institute of Politics selected to host Congress to Campus program

LAWRENCE — Two former members of Congress will meet with students to encourage careers in public service during a three-day visit to the Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas in Lawrence in November.

Former Reps. Cardiss Collins, D-Ill., and Orval Hansen, R-Idaho, will visit campus Nov. 15 through 17 as part of the Congress to Campus program to meet with media, conduct classes, visit with faculty and community leaders, meet informally with students and speak to student organizations. A free public lecture will be at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 15, at the institute.

The program, which selected the Dole Institute through a competitive application process, sends bipartisan pairs of former members of congress to make campus visits to “inspire and encourage students to consider public service careers,” said Bill Lacy, institute director. “Typically, the visiting members will share their real life experiences of both achievement and occasional frustration while serving in Congress and living in Washington, D.C.”

The program addresses several aspects of civic learning and engagement, combining traditional education content with a strong message about public service.

“With the drop in participation in politics and voting, not only is the breadth and depth of the electorate in decline, but the source of informed leaders for the future is in some jeopardy,” said Barbara Ballard, the institute’s associate director. “That is a problem for democratic government in the United States, which depends on an educated citizenry and on a stock of well-informed leaders who are willing and able to fill the many elected and appointed positions at all levels of government. The program provides a distinctive and powerful means to educate the next generation about American government, politics and public affairs.”

Collins, 74, was elected to Congress in 1973 in a special election to succeed her husband, Rep. George W. Collins, who died in a plane crash. She was re-elected 11 times, representing a district on Chicago’s west side, and retired in 1997. In Congress she was an advocate for airport security and air safety and she was the first African-American and the first woman to serve as Democratic whip-at-large, a leadership post.

Hansen, 79, represented Idaho in the House of Representatives from 1969 until 1975. He was defeated in the 1974 primary by a similarly named former Rep. George V. Hansen, who then defeated Democrat Max Hanson in the general election. A Navy veteran and a lawyer, Orval Hansen had served in the Idaho legislature before going to Congress. He resumed his law career after leaving Washington and later was president of the Columbia Institute for Political Research.

The program was founded by the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress in 1976. It reaches a wide audience of students, faculty and college communities with its unique story about representative democracy and a special call to public service. The association is in partnership with the Stennis Center for Public Service in Mississippi and the Center for Democracy & Citizenship in Minnesota.