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Dole Institute of Politics names Toohey, Cobb as Dole Fellows; to teach this spring

LAWRENCE — A former senior aide to Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry and the leading advocate for legislation known as the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights have been named senior fellows at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas.



Nationally recognized Democratic political operative John Toohey and Republican grassroots activist Alan Cobb will spend the spring semester at the institute leading public, weekly, not-for-credit study groups beginning in March. Students, faculty and community members are invited to meet Toohey and Cobb at a reception at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at the institute.

Dole Fellows will also interact with students, participate in the intellectual life of the community and pursue individual studies or projects, said Bill Lacy, institute director. “We are lucky to have two such exciting political practitioners as fellows. Each has the hands-on experience and study group topics that will greatly benefit our students and the wider community.”

Toohey, who worked on Kerry's campaign from January 2003 until December 2004, also worked in senior staff positions for the presidential campaigns of Democrats Bill Clinton, Dick Gephardt and Walter Mondale. During the Clinton administration he served as public affairs operations officer for the Department of Defense and as information officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

Toohey's study group, which will meet at 4 p.m. Tuesdays, will focus on political communication in what he terms the “new media” — blogs, news as entertainment, entertainment as news and celebrity politicians. “Entertainers run for high office, and lots of Americans — especially young people — get their political information from Jon Stewart and ‘The Daily Show.’ The line between what is real or merely a photo op is dissolved,” Toohey said.

Cobb, a former aide to Sen. Bob Dole, is Kansas state director for Americans for Prosperity, an organization of grassroots leaders who promote limited government and free markets. He previously served as campaign manager for State Treasurer Tim Shallenburger's 2002 gubernatorial campaign and as a longtime manager of public affairs for Koch Industries. He holds degrees from the Washburn University School of Law, the University of Pennsylvania and Wichita State University.

Cobb's study group, which will meet at 4 p.m. Wednesdays, will focus on citizen involvement, especially instances where citizens bypass elected representatives to have a more direct say in government. "From initiative and referendum to Colorado's Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, we will hear first hand from national experts the pros and cons about having citizens self-rule," he said.

The Dole Institute, dedicated in 2003 on KU's west campus, emphasizes civic education as an alternative to popular apathy and promotes politics as an honorable profession. Fellows are selected for their national reputation, energy, originality and potential to invigorate political life on the KU campus.

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DOLE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS - SPRING SEMESTER FELLOWS 2006

Alan Cobb is State Director for the Kansas chapter of Americans for Prosperity Foundation, a grassroots public policy group dedicated to educating citizens and policy makers about tax and spending issues, judicial selection and eminent domain reform. Cobb also served as campaign manager for Tim Shallenburger's 2002 gubernatorial campaign and as a long-time manager of public affairs for Koch Industries. He holds degrees from the Washburn University School of Law, the University of Pennsylvania, and Wichita State University. He has worked in the offices of Senator Sheila Frahm and Senator Bob Dole. Alan is a member of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership program and of the USD 437 School Foundation Board. His not-for-credit study group takes citizen involvement as its subject, especially instances where citizens by-pass elected representatives to have a more direct say in government.

John Toohey has over 20 years of experience in Democratic presidential campaigns. He was a Senior Aide for Senator John Kerry's presidential campaign – for which he directed trip and all convention-related logistics – from January 2003 until December 2004. Following his work on President Bill Clinton's campaign staff, John transitioned to the White House where he served as Senior Lead Advance and Press Lead for President Clinton and Vice President Gore. He also served in the Clinton administration as Public Affairs Operations Officer for the Department of Defense and as Information Officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development, stationed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He has also worked in senior staff positions for the campaigns of Dick Gephardt and Walter Mondale. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts-Boston. John currently works as an independent consultant in marketing and communications. His study group will focus on political communication in what he terms the "new media": blogs, news as entertainment, entertainment as news, and celebrity politicians.

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