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Tax-Exempt Foundation Being Shut Down by Dole

Associated Press

Republican presidential candidate Robert J. Dole is abruptly closing his tax-exempt Better America Foundation after critics demanded the identities of its benefactors and questioned its ties to his campaign.

"It now appears that some would use attacks on the foundation as a way to obscure the debate on the issues this organization was established to advance," said a statement issued by Dole and executive director Jim Whittinghill. "Rather than allow opponents to muddy the water, the foundation has decided to deny them this distraction. Therefore, effective June 30, 1995, the Better America Foundation will cease operations."

It was not immediately clear what would happen to the \$2.6 million the foundation had in the bank at the end of 1994 and any money it raised so far this year.

The Associated Press reported last month that the foundation had raised more than \$4 million in 1994 and spent about \$1.5 million on projects that would be useful to a presidential campaign: a poll, issues pa-

pers and a television advertisement that prominently featured Dole, the Senate majority leader.

The foundation is not required by law to disclose information about contributors and it has refused requests for voluntary disclosure.

Whittinghill, who used to work for Dole in the Senate, said last month there was no tie between the foundation and the Kansas Republican's bid for the White House. He did not return telephone calls yesterday. Nelson Warfield, a spokesman for Dole's presidential campaign, said the senator would have no comment.

Dole created the foundation in February 1993, and the IRS granted tax-exempt status. Under federal tax law, the foundation could not advocate the election of a particular candidate. But Dole's affiliation with the foundation gave him access to indirect help without having to limit contributions and identify donors, which he would have had to do if the money were contributed to his campaign.

One critic, Josh Goldstein of the Center for Responsive Politics, said not disclosing contributions provided "the very real possibility that there can be conflicts of interest."