

Commemorating a Legacy

Years of Service Honored in Naming of New Law Building

By Angela Lutz

One of Washburn University School of Law's most distinguished alumni is now immortalized in the newest building on campus. Officially dedicated this summer, the Robert J. Dole Hall is equipped with the latest advances in technology and accessibility to help propel Washburn and its students to success for many years to come. The stately building is also a beacon to the legal profession, boosting Washburn's national profile and serving as a fitting tribute to Dole's lifetime of service.



Robert Dole

At Washburn and across the country, the accomplishments of **Dole, BA '52, JD '52, H '69, H '85**, are well known. A World War II veteran, Dole earned his law degree at Washburn after returning from military service. He went on to become a highly respected senator for the state of Kansas for nearly 30 years, developing a reputation for his down-to-earth yet

tough persona and ability to work across party lines. For these reasons, JuliAnn Mazachek, president, Washburn University, said naming the new law school building after Dole was an obvious choice.

“Sen. Dole is the consummate alumni, statesman, politician, civic leader, and person who has contributed to our state and our nation,” Mazachek said. “He was always such a great supporter of Washburn University, and we believe he was someone who represented what Washburn Law at the core was all about.”

While serving in the military, Dole suffered an injury that impacted mobility in his right hand and arm, forcing him to relearn how to write with his left hand and making law school note taking exceedingly difficult. Throughout his life, Dole was an avid disability rights advocate, including playing a prominent role in the 1990 passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. In the new law school building, students can record and revisit lectures as needed, allowing them to learn at their own pace.

Mazachek believes the new technology is an excellent way to honor Dole's legacy by making legal education more accessible to all students. The building also has dedicated spaces to accommodate collaborative learning and group work and features courtrooms and technology identical to what students

will encounter in the real world. This gives them a head start in their future careers – and makes them more aware of the duty they have as public servants.

“We wanted the building to reflect the high quality of education we provide at Washburn, so when students walked in they were aware of the tremendous responsibility they have,” Mazachek said. “We want them to know this is important and that we take it seriously, and they're going to be the best prepared they can possibly be.”

The classrooms also have state-of-the-art technology that allows students to capitalize on Washburn's Third Year Anywhere initiative, enabling participants to complete their third year of law school from anywhere they can access the internet. Distance learning gives burgeoning lawyers the invaluable opportunity to gain experience and familiarity in the location where they plan to practice after graduation. Mazachek believes the building's many technological advancements and modern amenities will attract more students and top faculty to Washburn.

“That will be great for our community – so many of our attorneys who graduate from Washburn stay right here in our state,” she said. “They are leaders and public servants who



Photo by Jeremy Wangler

meet the needs of Kansas, just like Sen. Dole did throughout his career. We are glad this building will help us continue that mission.”

In addition to the building, donors also established the Robert J. Dole Plaza that prominently features a sculpture from Omaha-based artist John Lajba. The piece, titled “To the Stars Through Difficulty,” stands on granite from the same quarry used for the World War 2 Memorial in Washington, DC that Sen. Dole championed.

For Dole’s family, the new law school building is an ideal way to honor the man they loved personally and admired professionally. Dole and his wife, Sen. Elizabeth Dole, were married for 46 years until his death in 2021. She also had a successful political career, serving as a North Carolina senator and U.S. secretary of transportation. She believes despite his inherent humility, her husband would be proud to see his name on the new building.

“After World War II, Washburn University became the threshold of a new chapter of public service for Bob,” she said. “His law studies, in particular, inspired a new path in life, dedicated to ensuring that every American had a fair shot at achieving the American dream. While ever humble, I

know Bob would be proud to see his name on the wall of an institution where future generations will discover that same sense of service and how they can use their education to better the world around them.”

“The new Robert J. Dole Hall gives Dad a permanent place at Washburn – the foundation that launched his legendary career and helped him become one of the most influential and respected public servants of our time,” added Dole’s daughter, Robin Dole.

As Washburn students and faculty begin to utilize the new building and take advantage of all it has to offer, Dole’s legacy will live on in the success of this joint project between Washburn and the university’s alumni and donors, which Mazachek said is the result of a shared vision and commitment to the future generations of Washburn Law.

“I had the great fortune of working with Sen. Dole for many years, and he is someone you aspire to be like and lead like,” Mazachek said. “He always had Kansas at the heart of what he could accomplish and what could make our nation the best. I have such respect for him and the difference he made for our country, and it was truly an honor to be able to name the building after him.”

Photo by Jeremy Wangler





Students utilize new classrooms. Photo by Jeremy Wangler



Guests tour the new common spaces at the building opening. Photos by Nick Krug