

# Forbes pulls out of race, pledges support to Dole

WASHINGTON — With just 76 delegates to show for his \$30 million investment, Steve Forbes decided Wednesday to abandon his bid for the Republican presidential nomination and throw his support to GOP front-runner Bob Dole, aides said.

Forbes planned a Thursday afternoon withdrawal announcement in Washington, said campaign manager Bill Dal Col. A senior Forbes aide, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Forbes would endorse Dole and pledge his help in defeating President Clinton in the fall.

Dal Col said one reason Forbes put off the formal announcement for a day was so that his family could join him. "No doubt about it — it helps," Dole said when asked about the effect of Forbes' withdrawal. He declined further comment until Forbes makes his remarks Thursday.

Forbes had vowed as recently as Wednesday morning to stay in the race through the March 19 Midwestern

recent weeks that he wants to take his flat-tax message to the voters.

But in the face of Tuesday's defeat, he talked openly about getting out of the race if he didn't have a strong showing in next week's Rust Belt primaries, setting in motion a series of night-and-day consultations that led to his decision to withdraw.

And after spending much of the day closeted in a Washington hotel room with advisers, Forbes accepted their judgment that the chances for a victory in Illinois, Ohio, Michigan or Wisconsin were bleak, given Dole's big lead.

Forbes then began considering quitting sooner and contacted several associates outside his senior campaign staff before making his decision, sources said.

A key issue was when and where to make the announcement. Forbes considered returning to his New Jersey home to withdraw, but eventually decided to stay in the capital, according to a source familiar with the de-

liberations.

Consulting with Forbes during the day were former Sens. Malcolm Wallop and Bob Kasten. Former Housing Secretary Jack Kemp — whose offer to serve as a bridge between Forbes and Dole enmeshed the campaign in controversy during its final days — also attended some of the sessions.

Forbes' decision came after the euphoria of winning the Delaware and Arizona primaries evaporated in the face of a string of resounding defeats.

Since Arizona, Forbes has not spent much money on television advertising, a sign to campaign watchers that he had reached the limit of how deep he was willing to dig into his personal fortune to finance his campaign.

Overall, Forbes spent more than \$30 million, nearly all his own money, to earn 901,000 votes during the primary season — 16 percent of those cast, putting him third behind Dole and Pat Buchanan.

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