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I just felt it was time to
leave'



— Chris Ochsner/The Capital-Journal

Theo Kassebaum, 20-month-old granddaughter of Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, tried to pull her grandmother away from reporters Monday after Kassebaum announced that she wouldn't seek a fourth term in the U.S. Senate. One reason Kassebaum gave for leaving the Senate was to take on the challenge of being a grandmother.

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Saying she felt it was time to go, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum formally announced Monday she won't seek a fourth term in the U.S. Senate next year.

Speaking at a Statehouse news conference packed with television cameras, reporters, members of her staff and well-wishers, the state's most popular political figure said, "My reason for this decision is very simple and fairly personal.

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**■ Kassebaum's
legacy**

"I believe the time has come for me to leave the Senate and pursue other challenges, including the challenge of being a grandmother.

"I think there's just a time when we instinctively sense whether it's time to leave or time to stay, and I just felt it was time to leave."

Kassebaum has served 17 years in the Senate and plans to finish out her third term next year working on major legislation as chairwoman of the Senate Labor and Human Services Committee. She is the first woman to ever head a major Senate committee.

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Kassebaum said she plans to introduce legislation after Thanksgiving that would reform the federal Food and Drug Administration and bring the legislation to the Senate floor next year.

"I've not made this decision without reservation and regrets," Kassebaum said of her decision to retire. "I believe service in the Congress is an honorable profession.

"We all like to joke about the Congress, and sometimes there's good cause for it. But politics is nothing more or less than the working out of our competing interests and our priorities as a nation.

"I hope I have contributed."

Kassebaum, who will be 64 when she leaves office in January 1997, said she doesn't anticipate running for public office again but also said she wouldn't completely close the door on such a possibility.

Considered a Republican moderate, Kassebaum said she isn't concerned that someone more conservative may be elected to succeed her in 1996.

"I have enormous confidence in Kansas constituents to elect the best person, and I believe that will be the case," she said.

"I don't worry at all. I think Republicans will be successful in holding the seat, but on the other hand you never know in politics," she said.

Kassebaum said she doesn't know whether she will endorse anyone in the big Republican primary election field that is expected to materialize now that she has for-

mally announced her intention to retire.

"I will support the Republican nominee after the primary," she said.

Kassebaum also said she would campaign for Sen. Bob Dole for president next year "anywhere he wants to send me."

Kassebaum said she doesn't think her seat in the Senate should be considered a woman's seat.

"I've always said the best candidates win out," she said. "There will be women seeking this position, and I'm pleased it's no big deal anymore, and that's the way it should be."

Kassebaum noted that she was the only woman in the Senate for the first two years of her first term in 1979 and 1980 but that now there are seven women in the Senate.

The state's junior U.S. senator and daughter of 1936 Republican presidential nominee Alf M. Landon said she is most proud of the work she did in helping pass legislation that restricted prod-

ucts liability cases on general aviation aircraft, the type for which her hometown of Wichita is famous.

Kassebaum also said she was proud of her service as an election observer in 1982 to El Salvador during that Central American nation's first democratic elections.

She said she doesn't think the state's interests in Congress will be harmed by her retirement from the Senate and the possibility that the state's other senator, Dole, could be elected president in 1996 and have to leave the Senate.

Kassebaum noted that U.S. Rep. Pat Roberts will remain in the House, as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

“We all like to joke about the Congress, and sometimes there's good cause for it. But politics is nothing more or less than the working out of our competing interests and our priorities as a nation. I hope I have contributed.”

— Sen. Nancy Kassebaum