

6/02/2008 This Week in Congress

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June 2, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." In observance of Memorial Day, Congress did not meet this week. I spent my time away from Washington, D.C., visiting with Kansans. Throughout the week I have heard Kansans express their concern with fuel costs. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Sponsoring Transportation Planning Bill

I recently joined members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in sponsoring legislation that would lead to the development of a national strategic transportation plan. Our country has not had a unified vision for transportation since President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. As our nation's population grows and fuel prices increase, we need a common plan to address transportation issues. This bill will direct each state to include all modes of transportation in the state's 20 year plan and identify projects that extend beyond state borders.

I was in Wichita Friday evening to speak during the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics Kansas 2008 Summer Games at Cessna Stadium. Since 2007, I have served as the Honorary Chairman for the Kansas Law Enforcement Torch Run. The Law Enforcement Torch Run is a year-round fundraising and awareness initiative that is the single largest supporter of Special Olympics Kansas. The Torch Run covers hundreds of miles throughout the state leading up to the Special Olympics Summer Games. Through the Torch Run and other events, officers volunteer hundreds of hours and raise thousands of dollars in support of Special Olympics Kansas programs. Wichita Police Chief Richard LaMunyon initiated the Law Enforcement Torch Run in Kansas in 1981. It became a national event three years later in 1984 when Chief LaMunyon presented it to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The dedication of our Kansas law enforcement officers to this worthy cause is admirable and I am honored to be a part of it.

This year's Summer Games theme was "Be a Fan of Courage." The activities were Friday through Sunday and included competitions in powerlifting, cycling, aquatics, track and field, tennis and gymnastics. Athletes participated in a victory banquet and dance Saturday evening. It was wonderful to see the excitement on the faces of all of the athletes.

Special Olympics Kansas works with more than 5,000 athletes across the state. By offering these sports and competitions, Special Olympics offers athletes an opportunity to improve their physical fitness, meet new people and become more involved in their communities. I commend the athletes, parents, volunteers and Special Olympics Kansas staff for all of their efforts. [Click here to view photos from the opening ceremony.](#)

Recognizing the 50th Anniversary of Lovewell Reservoir

On Sunday afternoon, I attended a ceremony at Lovewell State Park in Jewell County in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the completion and dedication of Lovewell Dam. The dam was dedicated June 5, 1958. I joined representatives from the Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District, Bureau of Reclamation, Kansas Wildlife and Parks, and area

officials and residents for the event.

In 1955, Congress approved funding to create Lovewell Lake to provide irrigation water for 60,000 acres in Kansas and 30,000 in Nebraska. It was completed in 1957. The construction cost \$8 million and required more than 400,000 hours of labor. Area residents celebrated at the time with a three-day carnival, band concert, boat races and a fireworks show. The 50th anniversary celebration on Sunday was a good time for area residents to come together and learn about the history of the lake and the positive impact it has had on the area.

Touring AGCO Corporation in Hesston

On Tuesday, I was in Hesston to visit AGCO Corporation and meet with Vice President of Operations Andy Blanford and take a tour of the facility. AGCO Corporation is headquartered in Georgia and is a global designer, manufacturer and distributor of agricultural equipment and related replacement parts. AGCO product lines include tractors, combines, hay tools, sprayers and forage equipment. The equipment manufacturing plant is an important company and employer in Hesston. I appreciated hearing from Andy and his staff about energy costs, AGCO's demand for employees, engineering and technical education, and the farm bill and farm economy.

Visiting Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas and Teachers Hall of Fame

Also on Tuesday, I visited the Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas in Emporia to tour the new annex that houses the severe mental treatment facility. The Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas is a non-profit community mental health agency serving Chase, Coffey, Greenwood, Lyon, Morris, Osage and Wabaunsee Counties. The Center provides children's services, adult outpatient services, alcohol and drug services, emergency services and a medication clinic.

Thanks to Director Bill Persinger for leading the tour and visiting with me about mental health care. It was also good to have Mike Hammond, CEO of Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, and State Representatives Don Hill and Peggy Mast join us for the tour and discussion.

After visiting the Mental Health Center of East Central Kansas, I stopped by the National Teachers Hall of Fame to record a public service announcement about the Hall of Fame, the importance of the teaching profession and the instrumental role teachers play in the lives of our children. Thanks to Glen and Carol Strickland of Emporia; Kelly Rippel of Topeka, a senior at Emporia State University; and Daria Cuznetova, a former foreign exchange student from Moldova who will begin her freshman year at Emporia State this fall, for their assistance with the service announcement. I also enjoyed meeting Jenny Harder, Director of Induction and Recognition, while visiting the Hall of Fame.

Learning about the Efforts of Heart to Heart International

I visited Heart to Heart International on Wednesday in Kansas City to learn more about the organization and see its global distribution center. I wanted to personally thank Heart to Heart for its efforts in Greensburg one year ago. Heart to Heart International is a global humanitarian organization that specializes in alleviating human suffering. The organization focuses on international and domestic programs, as well as disaster relief. Because of its partnership with pharmaceutical donors and manufacturers, Heart to Heart is able to leverage every \$1 cash donation into \$25 of medicine and supplies for people in need. Thanks to CEO Jon North for taking time to show me around the facility. [Click here to view a photo from my visit.](#)

Awarding UPS Employees with Service and Safety Awards

On Friday, I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the drivers and workers at the UPS facility in Hays. UPS provides parcel delivery service to communities around the world, with the facility in Hays servicing the surrounding area. I learned of issues affecting parcel delivery to rural areas and the changes that have taken place due to the recent escalation in delivery costs. I was pleased to help give the Circle of Honor Award to Ray Fisher, Dale Dreher and Terry Blide for driving accident free for 25 years. Courtney Schmeidler was also recognized for 20 years of service with UPS. A special thank you also goes to Mark Karlsekint, Johnny Miler, Ruby Jennings, Kelli Harris and Stephanie McDaniel. I enjoyed the opportunity to spend part of my morning with these great people. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

Discussing Health Care and Touring Hospira Inc. in McPherson

On Friday, I toured Hospira Inc. in McPherson. Hospira develops, manufactures and markets pharmaceutical and medical products. Hospira makes it a priority to lower the costs of health care for the patient through its products. This visit was a good reminder of the need to continue working with the Food and Drug Administration to make certain generic drugs are approved in a timely fashion. Hospira has brought a number of technical and scientific jobs to the state and is an important employer in the McPherson area with more than 800 employees. I appreciate Plant Manger Bill Gately leading the tour of the facility. It was also nice to have former U.S. Congressman Dick Nicholls, State Senator Jay Emler and State Representative Clark Schultz along for the visit.

Joining Fellow Rotarians for Meetings, Visiting Miltonvale Businesses

I provided an update on activities in Congress to the Olathe Rotary Club on Wednesday. Thanks to Club President David Robinson for the invitation to speak. Before the Rotary Club meeting, I stopped to see former Lieutenant Governor Gary Sherrer, who now oversees the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. It was good to visit with the Lieutenant Governor and fellow Rotarians.

The following day, I attended the Clay Center Rotary Club meeting to visit with fellow Rotarians. I also stopped in Miltonvale to visit local businesses and talk with community members. I met with residents at Ruth's Beauty Shop, Twin Valley Telephone, T and T Service Station, the post office, Citizen State Bank and Miltonvale Lumber for discussions about several current issues. The Kansans I visited with expressed concern about rising fuel prices and the economy.

Accepting Applications for Fall Congressional Internships

While many college students are just beginning to enjoy summer break and time off from studying, I encourage those interested in learning more about our government and Congress to consider applying for a congressional internship. I offer college students semester-long internships in my Washington, D.C., and Kansas offices. It is my hope that students will be able to gain skills and learn more about our government, which they can take back and utilize in their communities.

Intern responsibilities include assisting with legislative and administrative projects. Applications for the fall semester are due by July 7, 2008. To apply for an internship, students should submit a completed application form, cover letter, résumé, college transcript and three letters of reference. The cover letter should explain the student's interest in the internship and the goals he or she hopes to achieve from participating. [Click here](#) to access the application form from my Web site. In order to ensure timely receipt of the application, students are encouraged to fax their applications to (202) 225-5124. If students are unable to fax their applications, they may mail it to my office in Hutchinson: Attn: Intern Coordinator, P.O. Box 1128, Hutchinson, KS 67504.

In the Office

I was not able to attend a recent meeting with the Kansas Orthopaedic Society in Washington, D.C., so this week I took the opportunity to visit with Dr. Howard Wilcox Jr. of Olathe about a permanent fix to the Medicare payment formula and the Access to America's Orthopaedic Services Act. Joining Dr. Wilcox during his recent visit to the nation's capital were fellow officers Dr. James McAtee of Manhattan, President; Dr. Todd Herrenbruck of Salina, President-Elect; and Gary Caruthers of Topeka, Executive Director.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United State Capitol building, including Paul Unrau and Grant Yost of Moundridge and Greg and Joan Sorrell of Hutchinson. Also in were Kelly, Penny, Gabe, Jordan, Elizabeth and Zach Gienger of St. Francis; Laura, Rachel, Gwendolyn and Jennifer Staab of Hays; Steve, Connie, Christian and Jennica Smith of Emporia; and Chad, Rebecca, Samantha and Ethan McCary of Salina. In from Wichita were Charles, Cathy, Allison and Nathan Pfeifer and Paul, Diane and Hayley Worth.

Several folks from Nickerson High School came by for a tour. In with the group were Mark Farr; Dawn, Heather and Sarah Slifer; Jonathan Rohling; and Brittany Elliott of Nickerson. Also in this group were Kathleen and Eric Engelland and Danielle Schweizer of Sterling; Joshua Dohrmann, Regan Scott and Tamira Borecky of South Hutchinson; LynnErin Taverner of Chase; and Kren Bowlby, Joseph Miller, Lori and Kyle Smith and Rachel Janda of Hutchinson.

Visiting from Stanton County Middle School in Johnson City were Gabby and Orene Martin, Lucia Bezona, Larissa Batterton, Scott Campbell, Larry and Leandra Daniels, Kristina Gerard, Karen and Seth Holliday, Jessica Horinek, Letticia McKinney, Colby Overturf and Felecia Preston.

Very truly yours,

Jerry