

6/09/2008 This Week in Congress

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June 9, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Kansans Express Frustration about High Energy Prices

Kansans have repeatedly expressed their frustrations and concerns about how high energy costs are harming their family budgets and communities. It is past time for Congress and the President to act. We need to work to increase the supply of energy and decrease the demand. We must be aware and work to conserve energy where we can. Research dollars should be directed into exploring additional alternative energy sources, new forms of bioenergy and more fuel efficient automobiles. We must also tap into the oil and natural gas resources within our own borders. [Click here to view video of a speech I delivered in the U.S. House this week.](#)

Welcoming the National Champion Kansas Jayhawks to Washington, D.C.

On Tuesday, I attended a ceremony in the Rose Garden at the White House where President Bush honored the Kansas Jayhawk basketball team for winning the 2008 NCAA championship. After the White House ceremony, the Kansas congressional delegation had the opportunity to honor the team at a ceremony near the Capitol. I enjoyed visiting with Coach Bill Self and many of the players and congratulating them on their successful season. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

United States Assumes Presidency of the United Nations Security Council

In 2004, the United States declared the atrocities in Darfur to be genocide. Four years later, the Sudanese government continues to target innocent civilians. Approximately 500,000 have been killed and 2.5 million displaced.

Every month, the Presidency of the Security Council switches among the 15 members of the United Nations Security Council. This month, the U.S. will head up the group - giving it an important opportunity to shape the agenda. I joined other Members of Congress in calling for strong U.S. leadership and action to protect civilians and hold the government of Sudan accountable for its defiance of numerous Security Council Resolutions on Darfur.

Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's President, has placed restrictions on the deployment of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur, which has made peace difficult to achieve. In addition, a lack of helicopters and China's continued support of the corrupt Khartoum regime are further obstacles to achieving peace in Sudan. This week, two concerned Wichita students were in my office to advocate on behalf of those suffering in Darfur. Patrick Regan and Varoon Bashyakarla from Wichita Collegiate School were in our nation's capital advocating to bring justice to this region. I appreciate their and other Kansans' efforts to improve the livelihoods of those in their community, across the country and around the world.

Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune to Serve on Veterans Advisory Panel on Rural Health

In February, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it was creating a national advisory panel on rural health to advise the top leaders of the VA about health care issues affecting veterans in rural areas. My nomination of Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune was accepted this week by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. Dr. Moser will serve on the 13-member panel that will provide guidance to Secretary Peake and Under Secretary for Health Dr. Michael J. Kussman.

Dr. Moser is well qualified to serve on the advisory panel. He grew up in Tribune and returned there after completing medical school at the University of Kansas. He serves as the Medical Chief of Staff and practices at Greeley County Hospital. Dr. Moser was named the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians Family Physician of the Year in 2006. As a medical doctor working to provide the best care for his veteran patients living in a highly rural area of Kansas and Colorado, Dr. Moser's perspective has been invaluable to me and will likewise prove beneficial to the VA. [Click here to read more.](#)

House Hunger Caucus Looks into Long Term Solutions to Global Food Crisis

This week, I co-chaired a House Hunger Caucus briefing addressing the rising cost of food. This briefing focused on testimony from expert witnesses in the field of agricultural development. Scientists and representatives from organizations working with farmers testified about ways Congress can encourage higher yields. Fertilizer, quality seeds and improving growing techniques can help improve production, but many countries lack the infrastructure for farmers to market their produce. I was glad to see the Caucus begin this discussion. It is vital to increase the amount of food farmers in Kansas and around the world produce if we are to accomplish the goal agreed to last week at the United Nations World Food Summit - halving the number of undernourished by 2015. [Click here to see photos from the briefing.](#)

Visiting with Employees and Officials at the Hawker Beechcraft Facilities in Salina

I visited the Hawker Beechcraft facilities in Salina this week where more than 450 people are employed. Hawker Beechcraft manufactures aviation products for businesses, governments and individuals around the world. I recently visited the headquarters of Hawker Beechcraft in Wichita and wanted to utilize this opportunity to see the Salina facilities and visit with employees. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Aviation Subcommittee, it is important to know what issues are affecting the aviation industry in Kansas. Thanks to Chairman and CEO Jim Schuster, Senior Vice President of Operations George Wynn, Mike Hammond and Todd Westerfield for showing me around the facilities. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

Visiting Pawnee Health Services in Junction City, City Hall in Chapman

On Friday, I visited Pawnee Health Services in Junction City. Pawnee Health Services is a regional community health center that serves the mental health and substance abuse needs of a 10-county area in Kansas. Thanks to Executive Director Robbin Cole, Crisis Services Director Terry Becker, Community Based Services Director Vanessa Jones, Outpatient Supervisor Maria Ellis, and Junction City Office Supervisor Mary Shane for the tour and discussion about the difficulties they face serving the unique community in the Junction City area. With Fort Riley nearby, the center deals with Tri-Care, Medicare and Medicaid patients, as well as those with and without insurance. The message I received is that these governmental programs need to be more flexible. I appreciated the opportunity to talk with and learn from these professionals and commend them and all of our mental health centers for the tremendous job they do in serving an often unrecognized need. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

After that, I made a stop at City Hall in Chapman to visit with local residents. I also enjoyed visiting with City Clerk Marietta Lucas.

Recognizing Lydia Porubsky of Porubsky's Grocery and Meats in Topeka

En route back to Washington, D.C., I stopped at Porubsky's Grocery and Meats in Topeka to present the Porubsky family with remarks I delivered in the House of Representatives in recognition of their late mother, Lydia Porubsky. [Click here to read my remarks.](#)

In the Office

Sandy Barnett of Topeka, Sharon Katz of Overland Park, Kay Anderson of Leavenworth, Sarah Terwelp of Lawrence and Charlotte Linsner and Chelsey DiPlacito of Hays were in with the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence to advocate for full funding of the Violence Against Women's Act and the Victims of Crime Act. They also highlighted the importance of rural outreach efforts and the continued need to raise awareness about these issues.

Brad and Sherri Luthe, Connie Fahrbach and Rose Mary Mohr of Wichita; Gary Parker of Colby; and Karen Cook of Lawrence were in representing Mental Health America to talk about the importance of mental health insurance parity and the need for community support services. Mark Schreiber of Emporia was in with Westar Energy to discuss Westar's recent announcement to build electrical transmission lines in Kansas, as well as the utility's other power generation projects.

Members of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce were in to update me on priorities for the city. In with the group were Mayor Mark Hatesohl, Lyle Butler, Ron Fehr, Neal and Debbie Farmer, Dick Hayter, Jeff Levin, Sue Peterson, Dick

Carter, Mike Shilling and Linda Weis.

Cindy Luxem and Cindy Rush of Topeka and Roxanne Fanning and Tosha Baird of Baxter Springs were in with the Kansas Health Care Association to discuss quality retirement home standards and the need to preserve Medicare and Medicaid funding. Peggy Johnson, Terry Burnett, Mary Anne Foxx, Gwendelyn Anderson and Teresa Carter of Wichita were in with the Susan G. Komen For the Cure Foundation to talk about the importance of early detection programs and cancer research funding. Chris Theel and Kris Overman, both Army Reservists in Salina, were in to discuss physical standards for service members.

Barb Downey of Wamego and Lonnie Busch of Leoti were in with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Young Cattlemen's Conference to discuss challenges facing cattle producers. Hannah Miller of Enterprise, Tod Hildebrand of Junction City and Justin Thacker of Chapman visited Washington, D.C., for an FFA conference with their sponsors, Walter and Joelle Pitts of Chapman.

Michael Lerner, Deborah Graham and Eileen Kaplan of Overland Park and Warren Goz of New York were in Washington, D.C., for the American Israel Public Affairs Policy Conference. They stopped by the office to discuss security issues in the Middle East and the importance of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Eric Schmutz of Abilene also was in to visit.

Several Kansans visited my office this week for a tour of the U.S. Capitol building, including Michael Gillaspie of Ashland, Kristina Overman of Eskridge, Bruce and Nichole Mader of Junction City, Lance and Mary Graves of Ellsworth, Ernie and Jeannette Heikes of Buhler, Linda and Kathleen Nugent of Wichita, Chris and Cindy Theel of Salina and Jeff and Niklas Borchardt of Olathe. Also in were Gregory, Kay, Micah and Murray Heikes of Kingman; Kevin, Donna, Anna, Laura and Alexander Juenemann of Colby; Levi Smith, Taylor Schmidt and Shannon Webster of Greensburg; Mark and Tamara Wagoner of Hutchinson with their children, Sidney and Quentin Pease; and Duane, Stephanie, Jason and Eric Banning of Hutchinson. I also met with students from Saint Francis High School and Liberal Middle School prior to their tours of the Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry