

8/25/2008 This Week in Congress

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August 25, 2008

Dear Friend,

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

Congress Must Get to Work on Energy

Despite my efforts to stop them from doing so, House leadership adjourned for the month of August. My hope was that House leaders would take up a much-needed comprehensive energy policy. Last week, I joined my colleagues in Washington, D.C., in calling on leadership to allow a vote on energy legislation. Despite the urgent need to pass an energy policy and the numerous requests from House Members to reconvene, Congress remained out of session this week.

Congress should not be on vacation when many American families cannot afford to take a vacation of their own. Congress needs to immediately get back to work in D.C. to pass energy legislation that addresses the energy situation facing Kansans. [Click here to learn more about my thoughts on how we can address our energy needs in Kansas and across the country.](#)

Participating in Events in Junction City

Junction City-Geary County Military Affairs Council: I spoke to the Junction City-Geary County Military Affairs Council at a breakfast Wednesday morning about issues important to the community. The Military Affairs Council was formed during the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) process to help strengthen relationships between military leaders at Fort Riley and members of the community. I spoke about legislation I introduced that was recently signed into law to remove barriers for military families seeking affordable housing as well as about funding for construction projects at Fort Riley. Also discussed was legislation that I support to provide funding for schools experiencing growth as a result of BRAC. Click [here](#) to read about the legislation on affordable housing and click [here](#) to read about funding for Fort Riley projects. Thanks to Denise Ott, Director of the Junction City-Geary County Military Affairs Council, for hosting me.

Army Community Covenant Signing Ceremony: On Wednesday, I joined Secretary of the Army Peter Geren and leaders from Fort Riley and neighboring communities as they came together to sign an Army Community Covenant. The covenant recognizes the role communities play in supporting military families who in turn give strength to our nation's soldiers. Communities in Clay, Dickinson, Geary, Morris, Pottawatomie, Riley and Wabaunsee Counties are part of the agreement. The covenant is a reminder that we all have a role to play in supporting our servicemen and women. Also participating in the event were Senators Brownback and Roberts, Congresswoman Nancy Boyda and Governor Sebelius. Thanks to Civilian Aides to the Secretary of the Army John Montgomery and Mark Edwards for helping arrange the event.

Participating in Tours in Wichita

Touring Center Industries: On Tuesday, I toured Center Industries in Wichita. Center Industries, established in 1975, is a manufacturing company that primarily does subcontracting work for the airline industry. Center is also the sole producer of license plates for the state of Kansas. What makes this company tremendously unique is that 75 percent of the 308 people employed there, are disabled. It provides material that aids our National Security while making an investment in the Kansas community. I was pleased to tour the plant and learn more about this company's outstanding philosophy.

Thanks to Jack Jonas, the Founder and President of Center Industries, to the Center Industries Board of Directors and to the employees of Center Industries for their hospitality.

Learning about GraceMed: Also on Tuesday, I spent time touring GraceMed Health Clinic in Wichita. GraceMed is a federally funded community health center that provides medical and dental care to Kansas residents. The clinic provides the most compassionate form of service by addressing the needs of the underinsured and underserved people in Sedgwick County.

Currently, GraceMed sees over 30,000 people annually for medical and dental care and is planning on expanding to new locations. I learned that they are planning to host the first Kansas dental residency program and about how they continue to expand their coverage into western Kansas. Thanks to Executive Director David Sanford and the Board of Directors for hosting me.

Speaking at the Kansas Adult Care Executives Annual Conference

On Thursday, I spoke to nursing home administrators, nurses and social workers at the Kansas Adult Care Executives Annual Conference in Wichita. Approximately 20,000 Kansans live in the state's 350 nursing facilities. Kansas Adult Care Executives (KACE) is devoted to serving the needs of the professionals that work in these facilities. I spoke to members about funding for federal health care programs and shared my thoughts on the future of long term care. Thanks to Executive Director Phyllis Kelly and State Representative Bob Bethell for inviting me to speak at the conference.

Visiting Veterans at the Kansas Veterans Home

On Thursday evening, I stopped in Winfield to visit with veterans living at the Kansas Veterans Home. The 347 bed facility, which opened in 2000, is home to veterans with active federal service. It is Kansas' second home for retired servicemen and women. I talked with many veterans during dinner and thanked them for their service to our country. Thanks to Superintendent Jim Hays for his hospitality.

While in Winfield, I also stopped at the Kansas Veterans Cemetery. Veterans are the people I hold in highest regard. Their dedication, sacrifice and courage are examples to follow. Our country is fortunate to have men and women who are willing to answer the call of duty and accomplish great things for the benefit of their fellow citizens. The Kansas Veterans Cemetery at Winfield is a beautiful and impressive place of honor.

Attending events in Hays

Ellis County United Way Campaign: On Friday, I attended the Hays Area Chamber of Commerce Membership Luncheon. The program was the Ellis County United Way Campaign annual kickoff event. Volunteers for United Way have been diligently working to prepare for this year's campaign. This is the 55th United Way Campaign in Ellis County and the Hays Chamber has traditionally played a significant role in the success of the United Way. I appreciated the comments of Mark Lang, chair of this year's campaign, who spoke about the inspiration from his family to serve his community. Mark also spoke about this year's campaign theme, "Live United." I applaud the efforts of young professionals in our community who, like Mark, are engaging to make our community a better place to live. I will again serve this year as the Heritage Society Chair for the United Way Campaign. I am honored to be involved with an organization that supports so many important causes in our home community. [Click here to view pictures from the Membership Luncheon.](#)

Open House for LINK: Also on Friday, I attended the open house for Living Independently in Northwest Kansas (LINK). I had the chance to meet with Program Services Director Steve Bird, Board of Directors member Bob Barker, and Executive Director Brain Atwell. LINK provides assistance to individuals with disabilities to allow them to live an independent and self-sufficient life. The facility advocates the many policy issues facing people with disabilities. I appreciate the efforts of LINK to make a better life for Kansans with disabilities and am thankful for the invitation to join

them in order to learn about issues important to them. [Click here to view photos of the Open House.](#)

Leadership Kansas 2008: On Friday, I spoke to the 2008 class of Leadership Kansas during their meeting in Hays. Sponsored by the Kansas Chamber, Leadership Kansas chooses 40 leaders from around the state to participate in a six month program. I spoke to the group about the future of Kansas and the many opportunities that I see for us to be leaders. Thanks to John Federico of Topeka, Executive Director of Leadership Kansas; Brad Stratton of Leawood, the state program chair for the 2008 class and Travis Kohlrus of Hays, local program chair, for inviting me to speak. Travis Murphy, my District Director, is a member of the 2008 class.

Speaking at County Farm Bureau Meetings

I spoke to Kansas Farm Bureau members at annual meetings in Sedgwick, Cowley and Pottawatomie Counties this week about energy issues, the Farm Bill and other issues important to Kansas farmers and ranchers. Farm Bureau members help me to stay informed about issues important to our state's agriculture community. I was pleased to be able to provide members with a legislative update and enjoyed learning more about issues producers face in eastern and south-central Kansas. Thanks to Sedgwick County President Dennis Rau, Cowley County President Lewis Kuchar and Pottawatomie County President Glenn Brunkow.

Meeting with Rotarians at Hutchinson Rotary

I attended a meeting of the Hutchinson Rotary Club on Monday at the Prairie Convention Center in Hutchinson. I am a member of Rotary and enjoy visiting other clubs throughout the state. It was good to speak with fellow Rotarians, including President Lynnette Hilty, and Rotary District Governor, Thomas Martin, who spoke to the club.

Visiting with Residents of Lyons

I traveled to Lyons on Monday to meet with residents and discuss current issues. I visited with folks at the Rice County Hospital; Lyons Federal Savings; Lyons Daily News; Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball, CPAs; the Rice County Courthouse; City Hall and Lyons Veterinary Clinic. I always learn something from every conversation I have with Kansans.

Attending the Alton Summer Jubilee

As summer winds down and school begins, I joined residents of Alton on Saturday for the 23rd annual Alton Summer Jubilee. This event, which features games, an antique tractor pull and performance by the Bull City Opry, is a great occasion for neighbors and friends to enjoy one another's company. I enjoyed visiting with many folks in this Osborne County community with a population a little more than 100. [Click here to view photos of my visit.](#)

In the Office

Sara Harper and Chuck Hessenflow of Beloit, Matt Hessenflow of Manhattan and Robert Hessenflow of Oberlin came by the office this week for a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry