

9/15/2008 This Week in Congress

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September 15, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." After five weeks of August recess, I am in D.C. as Congress is now back in session. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Remembering Our Country's Heroes

Kansas Veterans Trip to Washington: I was honored to welcome more than 100 Kansas World War II veterans to Washington, D.C., on Wednesday. The group was flown from Salina to Washington, D.C., on a chartered plane as part of the Honor Flight program to see the WWII Memorial on the National Mall. The opportunity for the veterans to take the trip came from local volunteers and donors acting through the program, which is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that helped raise \$82,000 for the trip. Pat Hageman, a Rooks County commissioner, spearheaded the initiative after he and I talked about the program. The trip also included three medical staff who accompanied the veterans and 35 high school students who were selected to volunteer through an essay competition.

Among the group was my father, Ray Moran, who also saw the WWII Memorial for the first time that day. It was a

privilege for me to stand with these American heroes as they witnessed the memorial that forever commemorates their service to our country. [Click here to view photos](#), [here to view my remarks](#) and [here to learn more about the veteran trip](#). [Click here to learn more about Honor Flight from their Web site](#).

Seventh Anniversary of 9-11: On Thursday, as the nation recognized the events of September 11, we again remembered the heroes that made a difference that day and forever in our history. Our nation felt sorrow and shock as firefighters, American citizens, working professionals and family members tragically became the victims of a devastating terrorist plan. Seven years later brings us no farther from the loss that was felt worldwide that day, and we will forever hold our promise to "never forget." We remain grateful for our service men and women in the armed forces who continue to watch and protect our country to keep our freedom within our reach. [Click here to read my remarks before the House of Representatives marking the significance of this anniversary](#).

Passing Legislation to Improve Veteran Health Care Access

This week, the House of Representatives passed legislation that I introduced that improves health care opportunities for veterans living in very rural areas. The Rural Veterans Access to Care Act will ease health care challenges facing many veterans who are limited by their inability to travel to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. The legislation establishes a three-year pilot program that will permit veterans to receive health care access from health care providers and facilities other than the VA.

The legislation will give veterans the choice to receive care closer to home at a local hospital or physician's office rather than traveling long distances to VA facilities. It will permit most underserved rural veterans to take advantage of existing rural health providers, such as local hospitals, community health centers and rural health clinics. This legislation now needs to be passed in the Senate. [Click here to view my remarks](#) and [here to read more about this legislation](#).

Touring Kansas Ethanol, LLC

On Saturday, I toured Kansas Ethanol, LLC, in Lyons. As gas prices have increased, it is even now more essential to find alternate sources of energy. Ethanol is a clean burning renewable fuel made here in America from corn and grain sorghum that can lower costs when added to gasoline. The 35 employees at the plant work to convert approximately 19.6 million bushels of corn and grain sorghum into 55 million gallons of ethanol per year. Each bushel of grain at the plant is converted into approximately 2.8 gallons of ethanol.

Following the tour, Kansas Ethanol investors and employees held a meeting to discuss the importance of federal legislation that can benefit the ethanol industry. They inquired if Congress may mandate more flex fuel vehicles for American production. The focus of the discussion was how important it is for America to become less dependent of foreign energy supplies in order to enhance our national security. They also highlighted how important it was that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approve use of higher blends of ethanol in gasoline as the nation increases its ethanol production.

I was joined by CFO and Treasurer Brad Rayl of Hutchinson, Maintenance Manager Bruce Bentley, General Manager Mike Chisam, Controller Phil Darrah and Office Manager Megan Vincent. On the tour, I was also joined by: Betty Albertson of Hutchinson, Lori Rayl of Hutchinson, the Dean of Agriculture at Kansas State University Dr. Fred Cholick and CEO of ICM, Inc., Dave Vander Griend. Thanks to the Board of Directors of Kansas Ethanol: Kenny Knight, Carl Dudrey, and Dave Kerr. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

Congress Must Pass a Comprehensive Energy Plan

During my time in Kansas in August, I talked to many people about the need for Congress to address the current energy crisis and immediately pass a comprehensive energy plan. While Congress was out of session in August, many

Americans could not afford to take a vacation due to the rising energy costs. As Congress reconvened this week from a five week vacation, there is still no energy solution.

Energy legislation could come up in the next week as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is drafting a proposal that would allow coastal states to decide whether to drill for oil and natural gas approximately 50 miles from their shores. Preliminary reports indicate the details of the legislation will not allow meaningful oil and gas exploration. For the legislation to get my vote, it has to be a real and meaningful piece of legislation and not a political tool.

Congress must introduce a real energy solution to provide real relief for American families before adjourning. Not only must the comprehensive energy plan include meaningful authority to expand oil and gas exploration, but it must also include extension of the production tax credit for electricity produced from wind, solar, and biomass, extension of the biodiesel and solar energy tax credits and encourage expansion of nuclear energy. H.R. 6566, the American Energy Act, of which I am a sponsor, accomplishes these goals. I hope the House will be allowed to vote on this legislation in the coming days.

Introducing Fix to Farm Bill Provision on Base Acres

This week, I introduced legislation to fix language within a provision of the 2008 Farm Bill so that producers with overall land operations larger than 10 base acres will not be denied farm program payments. The current language was intended to create a more streamlined administrative process, but as written, it unnecessarily excludes many small producers from payment eligibility. The legislation I introduced this week will fix this provision and allow farmers to qualify for farm program payments through consolidation of base acres from multiple small farms. There remain additional implementation challenges with the permanent disaster program and the Average Crop Revenue Program Election (ACRE) program. It is still unclear how USDA will interpret certain provisions of these programs. Some interpretations could be adverse to Kansas farmers and diminish the effectiveness of the farm safety net.

I plan to visit with U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer in the coming days to relay concerns I have about the implementation process. Even though there are several flaws within the Farm Bill, this legislation will help more small

farmers. [Click here to read more about the legislation.](#)

Attending the 2008 Kansas State Fair

On both Friday and Saturday, I returned to the State Fair to talk with Kansans and learn more about the issues important to them. The State Fair wrapped up on Sunday after another successful year of attendance, events and exhibits. Again this week, members of my staff were on hand at my information booth located in the Pride of Kansas Building. Numerous people stopped by to talk about the presidential election, updates on an energy solution and the Farm Bill. While I was at the booth, I was able to meet Minnie Terpening from Haddam, who is 99 years old and was visiting the Kansas State Fair for the very first time. It was wonderful meeting Minnie, her daughter Luella Welch of Haddam and her granddaughter Glenda Thompson of Hutchinson. I was glad three generations were able to enjoy our State Fair that has historically entertained many generations of Kansas families. [Click here to view photos from the fair.](#)

Thanks to the Kansas State Fair Board of Directors: John C. Bottenberg, Fred A. Cholick, Charles Craig Jr., Jeff Deeds, Mike Gaskill, Mary Alice Lair, Sec. David Kerr, Mary Treaster, Sec. Adrian Polansky, Brad Rayl, Larry Steckline, Tom Tunnell, Tracy Taylor and Denny Stoecklein.

Pentagon Starting Over on Tanker Competition

The Department of Defense this week announced that it will terminate the current competition for the next aerial refueling tanker and will start over next year when the new administration takes office.

We owe it to Kansas workers, American taxpayers and our military men and women to ensure that a fair competition is conducted to replace our aging tanker fleet. I am hopeful that this delay will lead to an improved process that will finally give Boeing a fair opportunity to compete for the contract.

I am disappointed that the Air Force just cannot seem to get it right. All that is required is a fair and timely process with level competition. I will continue my efforts to work with the Department of Defense to see that a decision quickly occurs next year.

Agriculture Committee Hears from CFTC on Speculation

On Thursday, the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing to receive a report from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) about the Commission's recent investigation into how speculative activity by swap dealers and index funds affected markets through the first six months of the year. The committee had the opportunity to hear testimony and ask questions of CFTC Acting Chairman Walter Lukken about the report.

The preliminary information gathered by CFTC shows that swap dealers and index traders reduced their positions in the crude oil futures market during the run-up in crude oil prices this summer. This suggests that swap dealers and index traders did not inflate the price of crude oil during this period. However, Acting Chairman Lukken gave the committee some ideas on how to improve CFTC's ability to obtain information and monitor activities of swap dealers and index traders. I believe these suggestions have merit and I am working on legislation to accomplish the Commission's recommendations.

Passing Highway Trust Fund Fix

The House this week passed much needed legislation that will transfer funds from the U.S. Treasury into the Highway Trust Fund. Passing this legislation has been a high priority for me as the Kansas economy relies heavily on reliable state infrastructure. If the legislation would not have passed, highway funds would have been cut up to 34 percent and roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects would have been denied funding. Passing this legislation keeps these projects on track and helps keeps our transportation and construction workers employed so that Kansas can continue business as usual. The legislation now goes to the President for his signature. [Click here to view my remarks about this legislation.](#)

Visiting Beach Museum of Art at KSU

On Friday, Robba and I attended the Board of Visitors Annual Meeting for the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art at Kansas State University. Robba and I are members of the Board of Visitors on behalf of our friends Ross and Marianna Beach. Their invitation for both of us to be a part of the board is a generous opportunity and we thank them for their invitation for us to participate.

The museum was added to the Kansas State University campus in 1996 to feature the university's collection of drawings, paintings and watercolors and offers a cultural view at Kansas. The museum continues to regularly host exhibitions and educational programs. Thanks to chair of the Board of Visitors Beth Bird from Anthony, Bill North and to the members of the Board of Visitors and the staff of the museum.

Meeting with Kansas State University President Jon Wefald

While in Manhattan I was able to meet with the President of Kansas State University, Jon Wefald. We discussed the importance of higher education and biosciences at KSU. President Wefald has been with KSU since 1986 and has had a tremendous impact for KSU by increasing private donations, boosting academic research grants and improving the campus infrastructure.

In the Office

Dan Senestraro of Johnson and Dan Kerschen of Garden Plain were in with the Dairy Farmers of America to voice their support for repealing the estate tax and to discuss immigration and ethanol issues.

Very truly yours,

Jerry