

## 10/06/2008 This Week in Congress

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October 6, 2008

Dear Friend,

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

### Voting "No" on Financial Bailout Package

Thank you to the thousands of Kansans who shared their thoughts by phone, email and with me in person about the \$700 billion bailout package considered by Congress this past week. Despite my disapproval of the legislation, the bill passed on Friday afternoon by a vote of 263 to 171 and has been signed into law by the President. I hope that there is a good result from the passage of this legislation.

The package, authored by the Bush Administration, included my "No" vote when it initially failed in the House. When the Senate considered similar legislation, they added unrelated tax provisions to the package that did not change the basic legislation. The Senate then passed the package and it was sent to the House last Friday, where I voted "No" for the second time.

In principle, I could not support this bailout package because of the tremendous amount of money it distributes to Wall Street firms. The amount of spending puts taxpayers at risk. It increases federal spending also putting Social Security and Medicare more at risk. I was even more assured of my vote when I saw that a spokesperson from the Treasury Department explained to an online media source how they determined the \$700 billion amount. The spokesperson said, "It's not based on any particular data point. We just wanted to choose a really large number." To read more on my position on this issue [click here](#).

#### House and Senate Pass Bill to Fix Disaster Program and Suspend 10 Base Acre Provision

The House and Senate passed legislation that makes technical corrections to the permanent disaster program and suspends for one year a provision in the 2008 Farm Bill that denies producers commodity program payments on farms with 10 base acres or less. The bill awaits action by the President before it can become law.

This legislation was needed because errors in the permanent disaster provisions were resulting in adverse eligibility consequences to farmers. In addition, an error contained in the Farm Bill prevented farmers from combining base acres from multiple farms to avoid suspension of commodity program payments under the 10 base acre rule.

Technical corrections to the permanent disaster assistance program include:

- Decoupling the crop provisions from the livestock provisions, which removes the requirement that farmers have to purchase a crop insurance or noninsured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) policy on grazing lands to receive crop disaster payments;

- Clarification that farmers will not be penalized for planting a second crop after failure of an insured crop or using a double crop planting rotation when calculating disaster program losses;
- Adding a de minimis exception to the crop insurance purchase requirement for crops that are not of economic significance; and
- Clarification that the price used to set the disaster guarantee for farmers will be the price election used for determining losses under the federal crop insurance program, which includes the harvest price option for farmers purchasing revenue assurance with the harvest price option (RA-HPO).

In addition to technical corrections to the disaster program, the legislation suspends for the 2008 crop year the prohibition of commodity program payments on farms with 10 base acres or less. The bill also allows farmers who were denied the opportunity to enroll these farms for the 2008 crop year to sign-up the farms by November 14, 2008. Due to the immediate need to pass legislation, the 10 base acre fix was temporary and Congress will have to permanently address the issue for the 2009 through 2012 crop years when it returns next year. [Click here to read more.](#)

#### Calling for an End to Religious Violence in India

I sponsored legislation this week that condemns recent religious violence in India after the issue was brought to my attention by a Kansan's email. The resolution adds Congress' voice to that of many others, including the Pope, saying that religious violence must stop. In the last month or so, conflicts between Hindus and Christians have resulted in more than 30 people being killed in India. In addition to these senseless killings, some 20,000 Christians have been forced to flee their homes and are now living in government-run camps. Thousands of Christian homes have been destroyed and more than 100 churches have been damaged.

The resolution calls on India to restrict the reach and resources of radical religious parties, take strong steps to prevent violence and protect all citizens and condemns any law restricting religious freedom. India is the world's largest democracy. As a democratic country, the government must respect the rights of all religious groups and protect minority religions, like Christianity, from persecution and attack.

As always, I value the opinions of Kansans and appreciate learning from them about issues they care about. Please continue to share your thoughts with me.

### Recognizing October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

This week, I helped recognize October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence continues to impact communities in Kansas and across America. Each year nearly four million new incidences of domestic violence are reported in the United States, with many more unaccounted for due to fear and intimidation. Of those four million reported cases, nearly 100,000 Kansas women fall victim to domestic violence each year. I was reminded of the need for greater efforts to combat domestic violence this July when a young law student from Hays, Jana Lynn Mackey, became a victim of domestic violence. This October, let us remember the victims of domestic violence and learn from their courage as we do our best to make sure our communities are safe places to live, work, and raise our families. [Click here to view my speech.](#)

### Opportunities for Kansas Students to Learn and Serve in Washington, D.C.

The deadline to submit applications for spring 2009 Internships in my office and the spring 2009 House Page Program is quickly approaching. My own interest in public service was sparked when I spent a semester serving Kansans as in an intern for First District Congressman Keith Sebelius in 1974. As an intern, I was able to see firsthand how a congressional office operates and how the legislative process works. These same opportunities are available to Kansans that intern in my congressional office or page for the House of Representatives.

The internship program is available for all college students. Course credit can be arranged through my office and the student's academic institution. Students wishing to be a House Page must be in their junior year of high school and must meet certain academic standards. The deadline for internship applications is Wednesday, October 15. The deadline for House Page applications is Monday, October 27. Both applications can be faxed to my Washington, D.C., office at (202) 225-5124. [Click here to learn more about internships in my office.](#) [Click here to learn more about the House Page Program.](#)

#### In the Office

Several Kansans were in this week for a tour of the U.S. Capitol. Ron and Jennifer Seeber and their children, Michaela, Elise and Olivia Jamison of Topeka were in as were Mary Lou Warren and Lauri Skinner of Great Bend.

Megan Miner of Lyndon visited the office this week while in D.C. with the National Youth Leadership Council.

Very truly yours,

Jerry