

1/05/2009 This Week in Congress

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January 5, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you and your family had a blessed holiday season and I wish you a very Happy New Year. I returned to Washington, D.C., today to begin working on behalf of Kansans in the 111th Congress.

Serving Kansans and The First District in 2009

As we begin a new year and a new Congress, I look forward to working on the issues in 2009 that are important to Kansans. Tomorrow, I will be sworn in for my seventh term as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Congress will soon consider the economic stimulus plan advocated by President-elect Barack Obama. While details are not firm, estimates put the plan's cost between \$700 billion and \$1 trillion. Some of this money will be spent on investment in U.S. infrastructure, extension of unemployment benefits and research into "green" technologies. The package may also include tax cuts for workers, businesses, middle-class families and couples.

While I believe Congress and the President should aggressively take action to address the challenges our economy is facing, the money to pay for this plan will come from future generations and will increase our nation's debt. Investment in our nation's infrastructure has merit, but I am worried that Congress, in its usual fashion, will place huge amounts of unnecessary spending in the bill - calling everything "economic stimulus." I will review the final plan to in order to determine if it will be an appropriate investment in creating jobs and improving the long term health of the U.S. economy or just more pork-barrel spending. I welcome your comments about this issue. [Click here to send me a message.](#)

I believe if we want to improve the economic circumstances of Kansas families we must address the cost of health care and get back to developing an energy policy based on new supplies, renewable fuel and conservation.

In this new Congress, my committee assignments will remain the same. I will remain on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the House Agriculture Committee and the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

I hope the new Congress and a new president can work together to address the important issues facing our nation. While we all need to fight for the principles we believe in, the political bickering we have seen for so long serves no useful purpose. I came to Congress not to advance an agenda of a political party, but to see that good things happen in America.

I am honored to serve as your Congressman from the First Congressional District. By working together, I am confident that 2009 will bring great things for the people of Kansas and America.

Israel Defends Itself in Face of Terrorist Attacks

Since my last update, conflict has unfortunately returned to the Middle East. For years, Israelis near Gaza have lived in fear of rocket and mortar attacks. Thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel by Hamas militants living in Gaza since 2001. In June 2008, Israel and Hamas agreed to a six-month truce, which ended on December 19. During this time, however, Hamas continued to launch rockets at Israel. After the truce ended, rocket attacks increased and have now reached deeper into Israel than ever before. Some 700,000 Israelis now find themselves within range of Hamas' rockets.

I hope both groups will implement a swift ceasefire to put an end to this conflict and stop unnecessary civilian casualties. [Click here to read my statement.](#)

From Washington to Home: Continuing My Thirteenth Annual Listening Tour

During December, I visited Kansas communities as part of my thirteenth Annual Listening Tour. In the past three weeks, I have visited with folks in 19 communities including Washington, Republic, Gove, Sheridan, Ness, Hodgeman, Meade, Clark, Russell, Reno, Rice, Osborne, Rooks, Pawnee, Morris, Geary, Phillips, Trego and Graham counties. Following the Trego County town hall on Friday, I toured the Trego County Lemke Memorial Hospital and visited the Long-Term Care and Assisted Living units. I very much appreciate that people took time out of their busy holiday schedules to meet with me.

I will continue the tour this next week by visiting Rush, Edwards, Clay and Ellis counties. Each stop is useful to me as I meet directly with Kansans to hear their thoughts and concerns. I look forward to visiting with Kansans when I am in each

county.

[Click here to view times and locations and to stay up-to-date on tour stops still being scheduled.](#)

Supporting Our Military Men and Women

It is always important to remember the brave men and women that are serving our country, but especially so around the holidays as they are away from their spouses and loved ones. From Iraq to Afghanistan, thousands of soldiers wake every morning to defend the American way of life. I encourage people to take a moment and reach out to these military men and women to demonstrate support. I am encouraged by the progress U.S. troops have made on the War on Terror and hope their progress leads to shorter and less service tours abroad for them. Thank you to all of those Kansans who are currently serving or have a loved one who is serving overseas.

Very truly yours,

Jerry