

3/16/2009 This Week in Congress

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March 16, 2009

Dear Friend,

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

Bringing Kansas Veterans' Priorities to VA Secretary

This week, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing where Department of Veterans' Affairs Secretary Shinseki discussed the VA's fiscal year 2010 budget and priorities. During the hearing, I questioned the Secretary about additional enrollment for Priority 8 veterans, timely VA funding and implementation of the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act that was passed last year. This legislation will allow rural Kansas veterans to participate in a demonstration project to obtain health care in their home communities so that they avoid traveling long distances to VA facilities.

I also learned this week that my involvement with veterans' issues will continue to increase as I was asked by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's Ranking Member, Congressman Steve Buyer, to serve on the Republican Policy Committee (RPC). I will serve on the RPC as an active voice for veterans and other issues important to Kansas and the country. It is vital that Congress maintain strong benefits and health care services for our nation's military men and women and our veterans. By serving on this committee, I will help develop legislative initiatives that support veterans and will make sure that veterans' issues remain a priority for Congress.

Refueling Tanker Program Should Not Be Delayed

This week, I asked President Obama to reconsider his budget office's instruction to the Pentagon to delay the Air Force's replacement of its aging aerial refueling tanker fleet for five years. The Air Force's current tanker fleet was built on average over 47 years ago. A five year delay in building the next generation of tankers would be adding additional risk to military men and women who are performing missions around the world. Our military should not delay this top priority. I hope the White House reconsiders and works with the Pentagon to modernize the tanker fleet as soon as possible.

Meeting with Members of Kansas Bioscience Authority in D.C.

This week, I attended several meetings hosted by the Kansas Bioscience Authority (KBA). Created by the Kansas Economic Growth Act of 2004, the group's purpose is to advance Kansas' national leadership in bioscience by expanding the state's research capacity. It is an independent entity of the state and is governed by an 11 person board of directors that is made up of local and national leaders in industry and academics.

Members of KBA and members of the Kansas Legislature were in Washington, D.C., to meet with members of the Kansas congressional delegation to discuss KBA advancements and 2010 federal bioscience priorities. During these meetings, we discussed ways to position Kansas as a leader in emerging biomass and biofuel technologies and

production practices. We also discussed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision that Manhattan is to be the future home of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). I will work with the administration to make certain that funding for NBAF construction and research is a top priority.

Attending Agriculture Committee Meeting

I participated in a House Agriculture Committee meeting this week to review the budget for agriculture programs in 2010. We discussed the Agriculture Committee's budget estimates and considerations for FY 2010 and sent the budget request to the House Budget Committee in preparation of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Resolution. The letter to the House Budget Committee highlighted the importance for Congress to maintain the 2008 Farm Bill, a bill that took almost two years to complete. In these difficult economic times, this is not the time to re-visit the Farm Bill, where farm safety net programs were significantly cut less than one year ago.

The letter also requested that the Budget Committee reject President Obama's budget proposal to phase out direct payments to farmers and substantially change the crop insurance program. The direct payment program is the most market oriented, allows the farmer to plant according to market conditions and is the least disruptive of trade.

Visiting with Kansas Farm Bureau Delegation

On Tuesday night, I attended the Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) Delegation Dinner in Washington, D.C. Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts also attended the dinner. It was good to speak with Kansas agricultural leaders and farmers and ranchers from across the state about the agriculture issues being discussed in Congress. Each year, KFB brings each of its county presidents to Washington, D.C., to share information with public officials on behalf of the county they represent. Thanks to those KFB members who attended the dinner.

Learning about Golden Valley Coop

This week, Tom Giessel, Pawnee County Farmers Union President, was in my office in Washington, D.C., to discuss a fund that he set up that exchanges grain contributions into cash for the Helping Hands Ministry of Pawnee County. Grain donations made to Golden Valley Coop are sold for market price, and the cash is then donated to Helping Hands Ministry of Pawnee County. I commend the individuals of these businesses for working together to find a way to provide assistance to those in need. As families in our communities are feeling the pinch from the current economy, Tom found a great resource to use to help families. I hope other Kansas communities will follow Tom's idea that, "the land is our gift and our wealth."

Accepting Entries for 2009 Congressional Arts Competition

I am accepting entries for the 2009 Congressional Arts Competition. All high school students in the First Congressional District of Kansas may enter their artwork and the selected artwork will be displayed in the U.S. Capital for one year.

This year's competition will be hosted by the Deines Cultural Center of Russell. All submissions must be received at the Deines Cultural Center, 820 North Main Street, Russell, Kansas, between April 21 and April 24.

It is valuable to recognize and encourage the artistic talents of high school students from across the First Congressional District of Kansas. I encourage all interested students and art teachers to contact my Hays district office at 785-628-6401 for more information about the competition. [Click here](#) to learn more about the competition.

2009 Annual Meeting of the City Clerks and Municipal Finance Officers Association of Kansas

On Friday, I spoke to the 2009 Annual Meeting of the City Clerks and Municipal Finance Officers Association of Kansas in Wichita (CCMFOA). It was a good opportunity to talk with the leaders of Kansas communities about what they are doing in their home towns. I was able to thank these leaders for their dedication and hard work, which is making Kansas a better place to live.

During the meeting, most of the questions were related to the \$787 billion stimulus package recently signed into law by President Obama. Local officials have expressed uncertainty with what - if anything - the legislation may mean in Kansas. I know these Kansas leaders and I will work to be helpful to find answers to these questions for the benefit of Kansas communities and taxpayers.

Thank you to all the community leaders for giving me the chance to visit with them, and especially to Marietta Lucas, City Clerk of Chapman, who is the former president of CCMFOA. Also thanks to Gayle Martin, Public Affairs Associate for Wichita State University, who is the education director for CCMFOA.

Touring Executive Air Share in Kansas City

On Monday, I visited Executive Air Share to learn more about the business. I serve on the House Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation, so it was useful for me to learn that the company offers various types of aircrafts for business and individual flight purposes. The aircraft industry is, and continues to be, important to the Kansas economy. Thanks to Robert Taylor, CEO for Air Share, for inviting me to visit.

In the Office

Jack Taylor of Liberal was in with S.P.I.R.I.T. to tell me about the need to expand Highway 54 to four lanes. Robert Reece was in with Pottawatomie County to discuss a sewer project taking place in the county. Mayor Judy Newschafer and City Administrator Gregory DuMars of Lindsborg were in with the City of Lindsborg to update me on the city's priorities for the upcoming year. Greg Hildenbrand of Topeka was in with Lifestar of Kansas to discuss legislation that affects air ambulances. Don Bickle, Jr. of Hays and Chuck Udell of Leawood were in with the Automotive Aftermarket Industry to visit with me about card check legislation and the Right to Repair Act.

Jennifer Wellnitz of Neosho Rapids was in with Agriculture Future of America to tell me about the organization and how it is helping young college-aged students involved in agriculture. Tom Lutgen of Osborne was in with the American Seed Trade Association to visit with me about farm bill implementation, the future of the conservation reserve program and his association's role in the alternative fuels industry. Lance Woodbury of Garden City, Steve Irsik of Ingalls and Justin Knopf of Gypsum were in with the Agricultural Carbon Market Working Group to advocate for policies that will allow agriculture producers to benefit from climate change legislation and not be penalized.

Larry Brennan of Kansas City; Steve Dailey, Dan Fuhrman and Deuce Livers of Overland Park; and John Patrick of Lenexa were in with MO-ARK to talk to me about water infrastructure and flood control projects in eastern Kansas and western Missouri. Bill Moore, Jim Ludwig and Mark Schreiber of Topeka were in with Westar to tell me about the impact climate change legislation would have on its customers' utility bills and about electrical transmission projects in Kansas. Steve Riegel of Ford was in with CHS to talk with me about the adverse impact that climate change legislation could have on CHS's refinery located in McPherson.

Kenlon Johannes and Peggy Beller of Topeka, Bob Henry of Robinson, Craig Gigstad of Valley Falls and Dennis Hupe of Perry were in with the Kansas Soybean Association to discuss issues affecting soybean producers, including extension of the biodiesel tax credit and implementation of the 2008 Farm Bill. Don and Geneva Turnquist of Lindsborg, Don Teske of Wheaton, Tom Giessel of Larned, Jared Whitcomb of Elmdale, Linda Hessman of Dodge City and Herb Bartel of Hillsboro were in with the Kansas Farmers Union to talk to me about farm policy and recent local charity efforts of Kansas farmers.

Terry Holdren of Topeka was in with the Kansas Farm Bureau to visit about farm policy issues and potential implications for agriculture in the upcoming highway bill. Lee Robbins of Yates Center was in with the Kansas Cattlemen's Association to talk about regionalization of foot and mouth disease in Argentina. Kevin Dobbs of Lawrence was in with the Kansas Remote Sensing Program to tell me how the program has helped Kansans respond to natural disasters. Robert and Connie Corcoran of Emporia were in with the Kansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators to advocate for increased ease in administering federal loan programs.

Tauna Spain, Melissa Graf, Steve Reitan, Ronnie VanGotten, Jr., Steve Jones and Robert Faires of Manhattan were in with Flint Hills Job Corps to visit with me about the success of the program and tell me about potential opportunities to train Job Corps students in wind turbine technology and maintenance. Gary Townson of Rose Hill and Marjory Mortvedt of Manhattan were in with the National Active and Retired Federal Employees to thank me for supporting legislation that would eliminate two provisions that reduce the Social Security benefits of many former federal and state employees.

Elaine Wellborn of Topeka was in with the Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children to discuss the need to train teachers to identify high ability students. Ronald Walker, Daphne Maxwell, Bob Henderson and Janet Christian of Junction City were in with Geary County Schools to update me on progress made in the school district in meeting the increased demand for educational services associated with the growth of Fort Riley. Ken Gregiore of Norton was in with Valley Hope Association to talk about health information technology and the need to include chemical dependency as a chronic condition.

Karen Schell of Emporia, Julia Downs of Overbrook and Debbie Fox of Wichita were in with Kansas Respiratory Care to tell me about legislation that would expand reimbursement for treatment of Medicare patients. Brennen Clouse of Goodland was in with Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America to talk to me about supporting the Carl D. Perkins Act, which provides funding for career and technical education programs. Russell Plaschka of Moran and Steve Buss of Meriden were in with the Kansas Association of Agriculture Teachers to discuss the importance of career and technical education for Kansas students.

Dr. Mary Redmon and Dr. Kim Templeton of Kansas City; Dr. Joe Davison of Wichita; Nancy Sullivan and Dan Morin of Topeka; Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune; Jacque Amspacker of Shawnee Mission; Michelle Grindel, Trish Youngman and Kay Brada of Wichita; and Dr. Beth Loney of Plainville were in with the Kansas Medical Society to update me on the need to prevent Medicare physician cuts and to discuss successful workforce recruitment programs. Deanna and Ed Markley of Shawnee, Cindy Schaffer of Wichita, Tami Greenberg of Overland Park and Kay Julian of Leawood were in with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society to advocate for increased funding for research and to educate me about the importance of a national registry.

Rocky Nichols of Topeka was in with the Disability Rights Center of Kansas to visit with me about setting up seclusion and restraint guidelines for schools. Jan Long of Salina, Jackie Waters of Wichita and Nancy Niles Lusk of Overland Park were in with the Kansas PTA to discuss the importance of parental involvement in schools and the need for that to be recognized in No Child Left Behind reauthorization. Brad and Jared Marcuson of Oberlin, Keith and Connie Miller of Great Bend and Peggy Flagler of Maple Hill stopped by to visit.

Sally Cauble of Liberal and Janet Waugh of Kansas City were in with the Kansas State Board of Education to give me an update on the status of education in Kansas. Sandy Procter of Manhattan was in with the Kansas Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program to brief me on the success of the program and future expansion plans. Jesse Manning of Manhattan and Reno County Commissioner James Schlickau and his wife Charlene and their children Ashton, Caitlin and Cooper dropped by to visit.

Bryan Armstrong of Salina, Teri Smith of Lawrence, Nick Crossley of Olathe, Brian Stone of Winfield and Mike Selves of Holton were in with the Kansas Emergency Management Association to tell me about Emergency Management Performance Grants, FEMA and changes to the IRS's treatment of emergency management vehicles. Amy Fitzpatrick of

Hutchinson was in with the National Youth Leadership Council to discuss her leadership program and learn more about my role in Congress.

Members of the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies were in to talk with me about the importance of educated child care professionals and the need for child care development block grants. In with the group were Leadell Ediger and Peggy Goodwin of Salina; Jennifer Hecker of Hays; Amie Anderson of Lindsborg; Rebecca Clancy of Garden City; Laurie Pigg and Jennifer Crow of Topeka; Dean Olson of Kansas City; Cheryl Dunn and Clarissa Maddy of Wichita; and Vicki Sutton, Trisha Meyer, Linda Childress and Patty Peschel of Manhattan.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol. Gayle and Emily Wilson; Hilary Mayhew; Russ, Jean and Adam Gaeddert; Dallas, Joleen, Mason and Kyle Schwartz; Sherri Billington; Belinda and Megan Fellows; and Megan McKenna of Hutchinson received a tour. Cody, Tamara and Chance Heitschmidt of Nickerson; Velinda and Alicia Garcia of Salina; Brian Schwartz of Wichita; Meagan Weide of Inman; Steve Buss of Meriden; Russell Plaschka of Moran; and Khanh Huynh, Ami Rughani and Rupa Polam of Mission also received tours this week.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#). You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

Please do not respond to this email, as this mailbox is unattended. If you wish to email Congressman Moran, [click here](#) or contact him through one of his offices.

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