

## 4/20/2009 This Week in Congress

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April 20, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I am returning to Washington, D.C. tomorrow as Congress reconvenes from the spring district work period. I was glad to have the opportunity to travel around the state for the past two weeks talking to Kansans and gaining a better understanding of the issues most important to them. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

### Requesting Timely CRP Announcement from USDA

This week, I requested that U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack make a timely final announcement about whether extensions will be offered to expiring 2009 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts. I was prompted to request that Secretary Vilsack issue CRP contract extensions after hearing this question many times recently during my conservation tour and annual listening tour stops. USDA needs to make a timely decision about its intentions with expiring 2009 CRP contracts so farmers can make responsible management decisions.

Currently, Kansas has approximately 3.1 million acres in CRP. As of September 30, 2009, about 429,000 acres will expire. [Click here to read more.](#)

## Speaking Out Against Homeland Security Report Offensive to Veterans

I expressed my opposition to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano about a recently released DHS report that characterizes returning veterans as being inclined to join rightwing, domestic terrorist groups. The report's portrayal of the men and women who have served our country in Iraq and Afghanistan is deeply offensive. This unfair mischaracterization reminds me of the treatment many Vietnam veterans were subject to following their return from service overseas. Veterans have earned our country's gratitude-not our accusations.

## Speaking to Members of the Kansas National Guard

On Saturday, I spoke to members of the National Guard Association of Kansas (NGAKS) at their annual conference in Topeka. Citizen soldiers from communities across Kansas are playing critical roles in our nation's defense, from Iraq and Afghanistan to our country's borders. They have also responded to unprecedented natural disasters, including devastating tornados in Chapman, Greensburg and Hoisington.

During the event, I spoke to NGAKS members about making sure the benefits Guard members receive match their sacrifice. I discussed legislation I am sponsoring to continue to lower the age at which retired members of the Guard can draw retirement pay. I also talked about the new GI bill, extending TRICARE health benefits and a new pilot program I authored to allow rural Kansas veterans-including veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan-the choice to receive care locally, rather than traveling long distances to VA facilities. Finally, I discussed funding for the Smoky Hill Air National Guard Range near Salina.

Thanks to the Kansas National Guard members who gave me the opportunity to speak. Our state and our nation are grateful for their service.

### Continuing Annual Listening Tour

This week, I was in Norton, Decatur, Rawlins, Atwood, Cheyenne and Thomas Counties for Listening Tour stops. Thank you to all who came out to participate in the tours.

In each town hall this week, I talked about my opposition to the \$3.55 trillion dollar budget just passed in the House. I also discussed that there is a need to reform the tax process to make it less complicated.

Residents are invited to attend the town hall meetings to share their thoughts with me on current issues. [Click here to view the listening tour schedule and to see where I have already stopped this year.](#)

### Recognizing Students at K-State

Robba and I attended a banquet Sunday in Manhattan to recognize new members of the Blue Key Honor Society at Kansas State University. Seventeen students, including my daughter Kelsey, were inducted this weekend into the honor society, which recognizes college students who demonstrate excellence in scholarship, leadership and service. I was pleased to be able to support these students and celebrate their achievement. Congratulations to the new members of the Blue Key Honor Society.

### Encouraging 2009 Congressional Arts Competition Entries

As we approach the deadline for the 2009 Congressional Arts Competition, I encourage high school students from across the First Congressional District of Kansas to submit their entries for competition.

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, during the hours of 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

All Kansans are invited to join me in recognizing the winning entry and thank the students for sharing their talents by attending a reception on May 3, at 2:00 p.m., at the Deines Cultural Center in Russell. This reception will mark the opening of the First Congressional District of Kansas Congressional Arts Competition Gallery Showing which will run from May 3, to May 17. For more information about the competition, please contact my Hays district office at 785-628-6401. [Click here to read more.](#)

## Honoring the Life of Norman Jeter

A longtime friend of the Hays community and personal mentor, Norman Jeter, passed away Thursday at the age of 96. During the more than 70 years in which Norman practiced law in Hays, I had the privilege of practicing with him for nearly 15 years as a partner at Jeter Law Firm before I was elected to Congress. Norman was not only an accomplished and astute attorney, but a great father and husband. He and his wife, Ann, raised four bright children who, like their father, have given back to the community they call home. Norman will be deeply missed by all those who knew him. Robba and I offer our thoughts and prayers to the Jeter family at this time.

## In the Office

Alvin and Sharon Johnson of Oberlin and Byron Lange and Luralee Clayton of Shawnee visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry