

## 5/11/2009 This Week in Congress

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May 11, 2009

Dear Friend,

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

### Guantanamo Detainees do Not Belong in Kansas

On Tuesday, I spoke to the House of Representatives in opposition to relocating terrorists from Guantanamo Bay detention facility to Kansas. The U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth is one of the facilities under consideration to house these detainees. Earlier this year, I visited Fort Leavenworth to speak to military officers attending the Command and General Staff College. I learned on my visit that the fort houses military families and that it was not designed to hold terrorists who pose a threat to national security. Our country should not make Fort Leavenworth's soldiers, their families and northeast Kansas unfairly bear this responsibility at the cost of their safety and economic well-being.

In addition, Fort Leavenworth is known as the "Intellectual Center of the Army," where the leaders of our military and foreign militaries are educated. If politically sensitive detainees are located at the fort, many countries will likely

discontinue sending military students to America to be trained. [Click here to read my speech](#) or [click here to watch my speech on YouTube](#).

To block the transfer of terrorists to Kansas, I have sponsored legislation, introduced by Kansas Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins, to prevent Guantanamo's detainees from being relocated to Fort Leavenworth.

The decision to close Guantanamo Bay detention facility and relocate terrorists is one that our country's leaders should not make recklessly. Therefore, after the Obama Administration recently requested funding from Congress to close and relocate Guantanamo Bay, I sent a letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee opposing the \$80 million request. I was glad to see this week that Chairman David Obey announced his refusal to provide this funding in a war funding bill the House will soon consider. [Click here to view the letter](#).

### Sharing the Concerns of Kansas Car Dealers with the White House

This week, I talked to the White House to share the concerns of many Kansas auto dealers. A study conducted by a national consulting firm showed that reducing the number of dealerships at this time would do nothing to make either GM or Chrysler more viable. Dealers are independently owned, and combined, represent the largest retail business in the U.S., with approximately \$693 billion in revenues in 2007. There are more than 250 car dealerships in Kansas, and the future of some of these dealers could be in doubt because, at the direction of the Automotive Task Force, General Motors has announced it will terminate 2,600 dealerships and Chrysler could close 1,000 dealerships. The consequences of the White House cutting dealerships will be devastating to many small businesses in Kansas and the communities in which they are located. I have signed on to a letter led by Congresswoman Jenkins urging the Automotive Task Force and the White House to proceed with caution.

This week, I joined the Congressional General Aviation Caucus. The purpose of this caucus is to inform and educate Members of Congress and their staff about the importance of general aviation to our nation. The general aviation industry employs nearly 1.3 million workers in the United States and contributes more than \$150 billion to the U.S. economy each year. Kansas has a strong general aviation industry presence and I am happy to join this caucus to help better inform other Members of Congress of the need to protect and encourage this vital business.

#### Announcing Legislation to Prevent EPA Rule on Indirect Land Use Change

This week, I introduced legislation during a hearing of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from including increases in greenhouse gas emissions from land use changes in foreign countries in its model to calculate total greenhouse gas emissions from renewable fuels. The EPA was required to calculate lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions for renewable fuels under 2007 federal energy legislation, but it had flexibility to exclude uncertain emission sources, like international land use changes, from its calculation. Unfortunately, EPA did not use this discretion.

According to witnesses at the hearing, some of whom helped develop parts of the model used by EPA, data on indirect land use change is unreliable and impossible to accurately predict using current models. In addition, EPA did not calculate indirect greenhouse gas emissions for gasoline and diesel fuels, which are used as the baseline to compare greenhouse gas emissions for renewable fuels. Using EPA's proposed model will increase U.S. reliance on foreign oil and would unnecessarily penalize the renewable fuels industry.

To prohibit EPA from moving ahead with this unreliable model, I introduced H.R. 2283. This legislation restricts renewable fuel greenhouse gas emission measurements to direct emissions. This ensures the use of reliable and discernable data. [Click here to view this legislation.](#)

## Supporting Opportunities for Agriculture Trade

This week, I joined U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas J. Donahue in a meeting to discuss advancing the efforts to remove restrictions on the sale of agricultural products, goods and medicine to Cuba. The market is especially important for an agriculture state, such as Kansas, that produces wheat, corn, poultry and other items that can be sold.

In 2000, I sponsored legislation that made the sale of agriculture commodities, food and medicine with Cuba easier. Unfortunately, in 2004, the U.S. Treasury changed the rules, making it more difficult and it became less expensive to buy from others than from the U.S. As a result, the U.S. became an unreliable supplier, and we began to lose our markets with Cuba. I am disappointed that the current administration has not yet made an effort to change those rules and reverse the U.S. Treasury's 2004 decision. We need to make it easier for U.S. agriculture interests to travel to Cuba and for Cuban purchasers to come to the United States. [Click here to see a photo from the event.](#)

## House Passes Credit Card Bill to Aid Consumers

The House passed legislation with my support that would eliminate sudden increases in interest rates and double-cycle billing by the credit card industry. Double-cycle billing eliminates the interest-free period for consumers who move from paying the full balance monthly to carrying a balance. This legislation will help give Kansans some additional safeguards from the abusive fees and penalties of some. In a time of economic uncertainty, consumers need the basic protections that were included in the bill.

### Attending National Day of Prayer Event

On Thursday, I joined people of all faiths across the country in observing the 58th Annual National Day of Prayer. This year's theme was "Prayer...America's Hope." Since 1952, Americans from different religious backgrounds have come together on the first Thursday of May to pray for the wellbeing of the United States and those in leadership roles. I marked this year's holiday by attending a prayer and worship service in our nation's capital. The prayer service brought Members of Congress from both parties together for a time of reverence and reflection.

### Advancing Legislation to Honor World War II Merchant Mariners

On Wednesday, in the Veterans Affairs Committee, I supported approval of legislation that would provide a monthly benefit for those who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II. Despite suffering extremely high casualty rates while delivering vital supplies in World War II, Mariners were not given veteran status until 40 years after the war. I am a sponsor of this legislation to properly recognize and support these heroes. I am hopeful the House of Representatives will soon pass this legislation.

### Listening Tour Continues: Hosting Finney County Town Hall during 3i Show

On Friday, I joined farmers, ranchers and many other Kansans at the 55th annual 3i Show at the Finney County

Fairgrounds in Garden City. The annual 3i Show is sponsored by the Western Kansas Manufacturer's Association. During my visit there, I held my Finney County town hall meeting, as part of my annual listening tour. This was my thirteenth year attending the 3i Show and I always look forward to talking with those who attend and listening to their concerns. Thanks to Lory Williams, with KBUF Radio in Garden City, for broadcasting the town hall live. Also thanks to Dr. Eddie Estes, the CEO of the Western Kansas Manufacturers Association. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

[Click here to view the listening tour schedule and the areas I have stopped this year.](#)

#### Waiting Tables at Hays High Dinner Show

This weekend, I helped serve guests at the Hays High School Chamber Singers' dinner show, "Dancing with the Stars." The annual event is a fundraiser for the music group's summer trip. This year, the 28 singers led by Elise Peterson will perform at Disneyland in California. My daughter Alex is a member of the group and Robba accompanies them. Congratulations to all of the participants, including Kevin Davidson and Megan Adams who played with the group and choreographer Tawnita Augustine for a successful and entertaining show.

#### In the Office

Ward Loyd of Garden City and Don Chronister of Topeka came in with the Kansas Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to tell me about juvenile justice programs. Stuart and Griffin Lowry of Topeka, Perry Rubart of Ulysses, Loren Ochs of Jetmore, Mike Rogers of St. Francis and Jerry King of Dodge City, with Kansas Electric Cooperatives, came to the office to discuss climate change legislation and other issues affecting rural electric cooperatives. Jeff Borchardt and Jim Neville of Kansas City were in with the Kansas City Board of Trade to talk about regulatory and legislative proposals that could affect the futures industry.

Dan Senestraro of Johnson and David Meyer of Olathe, with the Dairy Farmers of America, came in to discuss issues important to the dairy industry. Amy Gerdes and Nicole Moore of Dodge City were in with Crop Quest to give me an update on Crop Quest's employee-owned business and their concerns about potential tax increases. Ron Pomeroy of Belle Plaine and Kraig Vondran of Manhattan, with the American Foundry Society, visited the office to talk about labor and energy legislation.

Pam O'Toole and Allison Malmstrom of Topeka stopped in with the National Association of Trailer Manufacturers to visit about an issue within the next highway legislation that deals with tow-away trailer transporter combinations. Mary Lou Reece of Scandia and Bishop Scott Jones of Wichita were in with Reece Construction to talk to me about highway funding and support for programs that help feed the hungry. Stephen Winkler of Seneca was in with Students Against Drunk Driving to advocate for increased funding for teen safety programs in the upcoming highway legislation.

Robert, Miriam and Jessie Glueck and Michael Lerner of Leawood; Norm and Alex Heisler of Overland Park; Michael Wade Smith of Goodland; and Dane Baxa of Salina came in with AIPAC to talk about the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Eileen Horn of Lawrence and Rick Gasaway of Overland Park, with Kansas Interfaith Power and Light, came to the office to tell me about the energy-saving measures congregations in Kansas are taking. Jennifer Scales and Keith Yehle of Lawrence, Chris Strathman of McPherson and Joshua Steward of Hays stopped by to visit.

Dr. John Lohnes of Wichita and Dr. Ron Hublall of Overland Park came by with the Kansas Radiological Society to discuss Medicare payment reform and advancements in medical imaging. Dr. James Kindscher of Overland Park, Dr. Gregory Unruh of Olathe and Dr. Katie Lang Smock of Kansas City came in with the Kansas Society of Anesthesiologists to talk about health care cost savings, transparency in health care advertising and expanding anesthesia services to rural Kansas. Peter Menihan of Mission Hills, Susan Hairgrove of Lenexa and Greg Reber of Leawood, with the Association for Advanced Life Underwriting, stopped by the office to tell me about the enhanced role life insurance plays when planning for retirement.

Larry Sevier of Lenora, Pat and Shannon Morse of Dodge City, Archie Macias of Udall, Brian Boisvert of Wilson and Ben Foster of Miltonvale stopped in with the Organizations for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telephone Companies to visit with me about expanding access to broadband in rural Kansas, the Universal Service Fund and potential changes at the Federal Communication Commission. Dr. Roy Jensen and Erica Brown of Kansas City came in with the University of Kansas Cancer Center to update me on cancer research initiatives and expansion plans for the KU Cancer Center. In 2007, federal funding supported important cancer research at the KU School of Medicine, created more than 1,558 jobs and generated more than \$61 million in wages.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Leon and Judy Hannebaum of Salina, Calvin Sheppard of Hutchinson and Joseph and Michelle Whitesell of Marysville. Also receiving tours were Lester and Susan Lucas of Johnson, Mark and Leora Hajek of Marion and James and Bobbie Phlieger of Plainville.

Very truly yours,

Jerry