

1/17/2006 This Week in Congress

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January 17, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

Visiting U.S. Troops Serving in the War on Terror

I returned yesterday from a week-long visit to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq where I traveled with six other Members of Congress to visit Kansas soldiers, meet government officials and view progress where U.S. troops are currently deployed. This was my second time visiting Iraq and Afghanistan.

The most meaningful part of my trip was the opportunity to visit our troops and express the gratitude and appreciation of Kansans for their service to our country. I was also interested in returning to the Middle East in light of ongoing discussions in Congress and by the American people on the role of the United States in Iraq and the War on Terror.

Approximately 150,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq, including more than 800 members of the Kansas National Guard. Approximately 19,000 U.S. troops are also serving in Afghanistan.

The message from the Kansas National Guard soldiers I met with was clear. They believe in what they are doing and that they are doing their job well. Many soldiers told me they believe progress is being made in forming the government, establishing security, building schools and in improving the everyday lives of the Iraqi people.

It is important that we continue to pursue a policy to transfer the responsibility for Iraqi security to Iraqi forces so that they can defend their own country. This year we will have a clearer understanding whether this can be done and whether Iraq's newly-elected government can successfully function. Political and military leaders believe there has been enough progress from where we started that success is achievable.

Our military men and women are working hard and morale is still high. While not a day goes by that soldiers do not miss their homes and families, they take satisfaction in the work they are doing and appreciate our support. They are proud of their efforts to empower the people of Iraq as they help secure the freedoms that we enjoy everyday as Americans.

In addition to meeting with Kansas soldiers, I met with Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan; Abdul Maloud, Iraq Minister of Agriculture; General George Casey, Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq; Ryan Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan; and hundreds of servicemen and women.

I returned home with messages from Kansas soldiers that I plan to pass along to family members in the coming days.

Observing the Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

This week our nation recognized and celebrated the influential life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As I was traveling back to the country from Iraq, my staff represented me at several Kansas events honoring the life of Dr. King, including Emporia, Salina, Hays, Ft. Riley and Hutchinson.

Many people admire Dr. King for his deep faith, his love of humanity, and for his belief in equal opportunity for all people. He believed that all people should have the right to work and make an honest living, the right to vote, the right to a good education and the right to use all public places. Dr. King possessed the courage of conviction and was not afraid to share his vision for the world. Dr. King believed in using love instead of hate to settle disagreements. His deep love for his fellow man was his motivation, and he acted upon that love every day.

Dr. King has given the whole world a dream, and his legacy continues to challenge each of us to be people of character who reach out to help our fellow man. Whether we are in Hutchinson or Washington, D.C., we need to show love to our family, friends and neighbors. We need to give to charities, participate in service projects and strive to move away from our own selfishness. As we remember this great leader, we would be well served to follow Dr. King's words: "Make a career of humanity...and you will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."

From Hope to Paradise: Resuming My Tenth Annual Big First Listening Tour

I will resume my Big First Listening Tour this week with the Ellis County tour stop in Hays on Friday. On Monday, I will make stops in Great Bend in Barton County, St. John in Stafford County, Larned in Pawnee County and Kinsley in Edwards County.

Visit my website at www.house.gov/moranks01/ for times and locations and to stay up-to-date on tour stops that are still being scheduled.

In the Office

Jim Ludwig of Topeka was in my office this week representing Westar Energy to discuss the recent Kansas Corporation Commission ruling. Melissa Adams from the College of Human Ecology at Kansas State University was in to discuss internship opportunities for K-State students. Carl Reddell and Emily Nye with the Eisenhower Memorial Commission were also in my office this week. They provided an update on the progress of the Eisenhower Memorial in Washington, D.C., and discussed proposed legislation authorizing a location for the memorial.

Very truly yours,

Jerry