

## 5/26/2009 - This Week in Congress

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May 26, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Memorial Day is a time to pay a special tribute to the brave military men and women who died while serving and fighting for our country. I was in Seneca this Memorial Day weekend speaking at the dedication of the Nemaha County Veterans Memorial Park. I hope all Kansans enjoyed this special holiday and took time to thank a veteran for their service. I also hope you find this newsletter useful.

Introducing Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act

This week, I introduced legislation to protect veterans' Second Amendment rights. My legislation, H.R. 2547, the Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act, prevents veterans from being unfairly denied their right to purchase firearms. It will reform the Department of Veterans Affairs process that prevents veterans, and their family members, from owning a gun if they receive assistance managing their financial affairs.

On Memorial Day, we honor veterans who have sacrificed to preserve our freedoms. We must make sure that they are afforded the rights they have fought for. The legislation will put a better process in place so that an appropriate judicial

authority makes the decision about the veterans' gun ownership rights. [Click here to read more.](#)

### Hosting a Meeting with Military and Veterans Advisory Committee

On Sunday, I hosted a meeting of my Military & Veterans Advisory Committee at the Kansas State Alumni Center in Manhattan. Earlier this year, I announced the formation of a Military and Veterans Advisory Committee to assist me with issues that affect service members, veterans, Kansas military installations and communities. The committee is made of Kansas leaders with expertise in military and veteran issues.

During the meeting, the members of the committee and I discussed the Department of Defense budget, the importance of professional military schools, the possible transfer of terrorist prisoners to Fort Leavenworth, the growth at Fort Riley, the Great Plains Joint Regional Training Center near Salina, veterans' benefits and health care, refueling tankers and National Guard enlistment. This committee provides me with advice and insight to make sure that our state's military and veterans have a strong voice in Washington. Thanks to all the members who could attend: Roger Aeschliman, Robert Arter, Jim AuBuchon, Rhonda Edens, Mark Edwards, Tom Fryer, Gene Heiman, Richard F. Keller, Chaplain Orris E. Kelly, Gary LaGrange, Richard B. Myers, Robert R. Ulin and Dave Warnken.

### Dedicating the Nemaha County Veterans Memorial

I joined Kansans in Seneca this Memorial Day weekend to speak at the dedication of the Nemaha County Veterans Memorial Park. The memorial features a long wall lined with granite plaques engraved with the names of Nemaha County veterans going back to the Civil War. This beautiful memorial will forever stand as a tribute to the veterans of Nemaha County who sacrificed so much in service to our nation. Special thanks to the memorial's designer and VFW Post Commander Ray Rottinghaus for the invitation to speak, and to the other members of the Veteran's Memorial Park Committee, including Jerry Boden, Gordon Grimm, Jack Kuenzi, Alan Mueting, Francis Schraad, Jerry Schulteans, Jim

Sudbeck, and Leonard Tanking. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

## Supporting Disaster Declaration for Kansas

This week I, along with the other Members of the Kansas delegation, asked that President Obama grant Governor Mark Parkinson's request for federal disaster assistance for the state of Kansas. A number of Kansas counties suffered damage from storms that occurred March 26 to 29, 2009. The storms that hit the areas of southwest, northwest and south-central Kansas caused an estimated \$18.6 million worth of damage. Governor Parkinson requested federal Public Assistance for 14 counties, snow removal assistance for 19 counties and Hazard Mitigation for the entire state. Public Assistance refers to money that is used to restore public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and utilities, and for associated recovery costs, such as debris removal from public roads. The Hazard Mitigation Program funds projects that are designed to eliminate or reduce the impact of disasters to a community, such as flood control measures.

Public Assistance was requested for Butler, Chase, Chautauqua, Coffey, Cowley, Dickinson, Elk, Grant, Greenwood, Harvey, Lyon, Marion, Sumner and Woodson counties. Assistance for snow removal under the Public Assistance program was requested for: Barber, Barton, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Grant, Haskell, Kearney, Kingman, Kiowa, McPherson, Meade, Pratt, Reno, Rice, Seward, Stafford, Stanton and Stevens counties. Funding for the Hazard Mitigation Program was requested statewide.

Kansas communities affected by the March storms need assistance with the cost of cleanup and recovery efforts. I am hopeful the President grants a disaster declaration to provide funding to these areas so that the affected communities can quickly rebuild and repair. [Click here to read the letter sent to President Obama.](#)

## Opposing Energy Tax Legislation

This week, the House Energy and Commerce Committee debated and approved the National Energy Tax Legislation. I am opposed to this legislation because it would place a massive new energy tax on Kansas families and will raise energy rates on industry, small businesses, agriculture producers and consumers. Certain studies show that electric bills alone could increase between \$200 to over \$1,000 per year for the average Kansas household. The legislation will also result in increased prices for all manufactured goods - including automobiles and processed food items - along with everyday products - including shoes and plastics.

Rural communities will bear the heaviest burden. Families living in rural communities who drive long distances for school, work or for medical care will see an increase in their transportation costs. The tax will also make agriculture production more expensive for our farmers - eventually leading to higher food prices.

Americans are already facing economic challenges. Now is not the time to place additional economic stress on families, farmers, business and consumers with this energy tax.

Accepting American Conservative Union Award

This week, I received recognition from the American Conservative Union for my record in 2008 of standing up for conservative ideals. Like the ACU, I believe in personal freedom, limited government and individual responsibility. Government should create the conditions for citizens to prosper. I am one of only 17 of the 435 Members of House of Representatives to vote against every stimulus and bailout plan. These plans have led to massive government spending and intrusion in private business that, with a rising national debt, threatens our return to prosperity. [Click here to view photos.](#)

## Agriculture Committee Hearing on Biofuel Regulations

On Thursday, the House Agriculture Committee continued its oversight hearings on a recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule to place unfair greenhouse gas emission requirements on renewable fuels. EPA has proposed to include indirect greenhouse gas emissions from land use changes in foreign countries, like Brazil, when determining the domestic biofuel industry's total greenhouse gas emissions. Under the 2007 Renewable Fuel Standard, biofuels must meet a minimum greenhouse gas emission test to qualify. The committee also reviewed a low carbon fuel standard adopted by California, which will take into account international land use changes when determining total greenhouse gas emissions for biofuels. The California rule threatens to cut off sales of ethanol from Kansas ethanol plants that sell in California.

Witnesses at the hearing explained that current information and models used to determine greenhouse gas emissions from indirect land use change is too uncertain to allow an accurate calculation. The Committee was also presented with a letter signed by over 110 scientists disputing the validity of using emissions from international land use changes to calculate domestic biofuel emissions. Last week, I introduced legislation to prohibit EPA and states like California from using this flawed analysis and unfairly harming the renewable fuels industry.

## Speaking at the National Crop Insurance Services Annual Conference

En route to Washington, D.C., I spoke at the National Crop Insurance Services (NCIS) annual conference in Kansas City. NCIS, headquartered in Overland Park, is an international organization comprised of more than 60 crop insurance companies. Its activities include member education and training, as well as statistical compilation and analysis. I spoke to the group about the importance of maintaining a healthy crop insurance program by eliminating fraud and abuse in the system. I also discussed recent efforts by the Obama Administration to cut over \$5 billion from the crop insurance program. The President's proposal, if enacted, would follow \$6 billion that was already cut from the program in the 2008 Farm Bill. This succession of cuts, simply for the purpose of spending money elsewhere, could have a damaging impact on the effectiveness of the federal crop insurance program. Thanks to NCIS president, Bob Parkerson.

## Speaking at Central Christian College Graduation

I delivered the commencement address Saturday to the 2009 graduating class at Central Christian College (CCC) of Kansas in McPherson. I encouraged the 62 seniors, who graduated from the 125-year-old college, to make service a part of their life - no matter what path they take. We change the world one person at a time. The talents, skills and individual passions each graduate possesses are needed now more than ever to make a positive impact in our country.

I was honored to join faculty, family members and friends to celebrate the achievements of the graduates. Special thanks to Dr. Jerry Alexander, who is serving as interim president of CCC. [Click here to read my speech.](#)

## Visiting Office Headquarters in Kansas City

Dairy Farmers of America: On Friday, I visited the headquarters of the Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) in Kansas City. DFA is a cooperative, owned and operated by the 18,000 dairy farmers, in 48 states, who are members of DFA. During my visit, I talked about topics important to the dairy industry including immigration and ethanol issues and about how difficult economic times are for dairy producers. As usual, I raised the desire to have a cheese processing plant in Kansas. Thanks to Sam Stone, vice president of government relations, and John Wilson, senior vice president of marketing industry affairs, for taking the time to talk to me about their offices.

Midwest HIDTA: Also on Friday, I visited the headquarters for Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program in Kansas City. Midwest HIDTA is a multi-agency coalition that enhances and coordinates drug control efforts among local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies from six states that include Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota. Kansas law enforcement officers work in partnership with Federal agents to proactively fight against illegal drug trafficking. I've seen the value of this program that provides agencies with coordination, equipment, technology, and additional resources as we've worked with Kansas law enforcement to battle methamphetamine in our state. Thanks to David Barton, executive director, and to Larry Tongate, deputy director, for inviting me to visit.

### New Videos on YouTube

I have uploaded two new videos to my YouTube page. [Click here](#) to view my most recent remarks on legislation Congress is considering that would harm businesses and slow economic recovery. [Click here](#) to view my speech where I called on my colleagues this week to take action to protect the helpless in Uganda.

### In the Office

Alan MacDonald and Jason Lanning of Overland Park; Joe Wininger, Cindi Bodine and Melissa Chavez of Olathe; and Connie Presley of Wichita came into the office with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association to urge passage of legislation to help modernize the Federal Aviation Administration. Bob Totter and Mike Crow of Topeka, Terry Beachner and Mike Keal of St. Paul and Kip Spray of Great Bend, with the Kansas Contractors Association, visited the office to discuss the upcoming highway construction bill that may be considered later this year. Greensburg Mayor Bob Dixon stopped by to give me an update on the reconstruction effort occurring in Greensburg and Kiowa County.

David Sanderson of Salina and Carolyn Bloom of Topeka, with the Kansas Physical Therapy Association, visited the office to discuss the benefits and cost-effectiveness of physical therapy and other rehabilitation services. Charlie and Henry Newell of Kansas City and Bruce Breckenridge of Leawood were in with CT Systems, LLC to provide me an update of their company and discuss the current state of the aviation industry. Sandy and Beverly Borne of El Dorado and Steve Barnhart of Wichita came into office with the Rural Letter Carriers' Association to talk about legislation important to postal service employees.

Keith Miller of Great Bend was in with the United States Meat Export Federation to discuss strategies to expand U.S. beef exports. Dr. James Gardner of Manhattan and Dr. Kathleen Sanders of Pittsburgh, with the American College of Physicians, visited the office to talk with me about the important role primary care providers' play in the delivery of health care to Kansans living in both cities and rural communities. Dr. Joshua Freeman of Kansas City, Dr. John Delzell of Mission, Dr. Bryce Loder of Lindsborg, Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune, Dr. Rick Kellerman and Dr. Michael Oller of Wichita, Dr. Michael Munger of Overland Park and Dr. Marty Turner of Derby, with the Academy of Family Physicians, stopped in to discuss the effectiveness of physician primary care and support for primary care education programs.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Linda Fox and Natalie, Blake and Katie Reed of Shawnee; Lisa Westlin and Yvonne Wilkerson of Prairie Village; Jones and Sarah Kithuka of Great Bend; Henry, Marietta and Courtney Nightengale of Sublette; George, Connie and Mack Rosel of Liberal; and Luke Berblinger of Hutchinson. In from Emporia were Gene, Carolyn, Brian, Steven and Kristin Nomura; Larry and Candace Blomenkamp; and Clifford and Linda Hacker.

Very truly yours,

Jerry