

1/23/2006 This Week in Congress

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January 23, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

Remembering Specialist Clint Upchurch of Garden City

This weekend I joined family and friends of Specialist Clint Upchurch for a memorial service at Word of Life church in Garden City. Clint, 31, died on January 7 in Iraq during patrol operations when his convoy was attacked by an explosive device and small arms fire. He was buried during a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery on Wednesday.

Hundreds of motorcycles from the Patriot Guard were also in attendance. The Patriot Guard is a motorcycle group that attends funerals or memorial services of soldiers or veterans at the request of the family to serve as a buffer between the family and protestors.

Clint served as a military police officer and had been in Iraq for three months. Before joining the military, he was a Finney County Sheriff's Deputy. Clint was a dedicated public servant, putting his community and his country before himself, in peacetime and in war.

After spending time in Iraq last week, I know how hard our soldiers are working each day. This loss close to home is a reminder to all Kansans of the sacrifices our military men and women make on our behalf.

It is Clint's spirit - found in so many Americans - that protects our freedom and makes this country great. We will not forget this hero and the sacrifice he made for our nation. My family and I offer our prayers and deepest sympathies to the Upchurch family.

President George W. Bush to Deliver 142nd Landon Lecture Today in Manhattan

President George W. Bush will be delivering the 142nd Landon Lecture at Kansas State University today. I am honored to be meeting the President at Forbes Field this morning and accompanying him to Manhattan for this prestigious lecture series. K-State hosts the Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues in honor of the late Mr. Landon who served two terms as governor of Kansas in the 1930s and was the 1936 Republican Party nominee for president of the United States.

Japan Halts Imports of U.S. Beef

On Friday morning, Japan announced it had halted imports of U.S. beef after finding parts of a cow's spinal column in a shipment of beef imported from a meat packer in New York. As part of an agreement to resume beef trade with Japan, the U.S. was to export beef with no backbone.

Having worked for two years to regain access to this market, I am concerned about this unfortunate situation. We do not know at this time whether this is an outright ban or a temporary suspension or how long it will last. The Department of Agriculture is conducting an investigation into the issue and is currently reviewing procedures to ensure compliance in every plant that is approved to export beef to Japan.

This comes just weeks after Japan partially reopened its market to American beef products following the December 2003 discovery of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy in a cow in Washington State. By working with industry and Department of Agriculture officials, I hope we can correct this error and prevent future occurrences.

Unveiling of Wichita Crime Stoppers Most Wanted Billboard

A new approach is being used to catch criminals in Kansas cities and across the country: billboards. This week I joined officials in Wichita to unveil one such billboard. George Lay Signs donated the "wanted" billboard for a suspect in a recent Wichita shooting.

This new approach has been a tremendous success in many cases. Seven out of ten suspects shown on billboards in the Kansas City area have been arrested. Billboards typically include a photo or sketch of the suspect and a hotline number callers can use anonymously. Some billboards also include reward information.

This is an illustration of innovative crime-fighting. Since billboards are seen every day, they are good reminders and ways for people to actively help their communities. This is an example of how good things happen because citizens get involved.

Hosting First District Legislators in Topeka

This week I hosted a reception in Topeka for the representatives and senators from the First Congressional District. This is the tenth year I have hosted this bipartisan event for state legislators from across the district to come together to discuss the needs and challenges facing our district on a state level. As a former state senator, I understand the issues facing our state lawmakers and know the importance of working together to find solutions for the betterment of Kansans.

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

I continued my Big First Listening Tour this week in Ellis County by participating in the Hays Chamber luncheon. This week I will make stops in Oakley in Logan County, McPherson in McPherson County, Hillsboro in Marion County, St. Francis in Cheyenne County and Goodland in Sherman County. Next Monday, I will be in Pretty Prairie in Reno 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.

Attending the Kassebaum Scholars Luncheon at Kansas State University

This week I attended a luncheon at Kansas State University honoring Kassebaum scholars. The scholarship is named in honor of former Kansas Senator Nancy Kassebaum-Baker and recognizes students who have achieved excellence in academics or leadership and want to make a difference in society through careers such as education, government or performance. Senator Kassebaum-Baker attended the luncheon and spoke to the group.

In the Office

Judi O'Grady of Eudora was in my office this week to share her daughter Brooke's experience of losing the battle with childhood cancer. Judi was in Washington, D.C., with CureSearch, an organization dedicating to raising awareness and finding a cure for childhood cancer. Sandy Kuhlman of Phillipsburg was in on behalf of Hospice Services, Inc., to discuss hospice care for veterans and her recent election to the board of directors of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Very truly yours,

Jerry