

1/30/2006 This Week in Congress

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January 30, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

Expressing Displeasure with Medicare Part D to Program Officials

This week I discussed problems with the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit in a conference call with Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Mark McClellan. In November 2003, I voted against the Medicare prescription drug plan because I was concerned the plan would fail to meet the needs of rural seniors.

I emphasized the need for more attention to rural areas as Leavitt and McClellan talked about continuing outreach and education efforts being conducted by CMS. I told the Secretary and Administrator that I continue to hear from Kansans about how complex this benefit is. There are many plan choices and many things to consider, like drug costs and whether or not your local pharmacy is accepting the plan you want.

Because of the confusion surrounding the prescription drug benefit, I have sponsored legislation to extend the enrollment deadline to December 31, 2006. Kansans, and seniors across the country, need more time to sort through their options and choose a plan that best fits their health care needs.

Discussing Republican River Water Issues with Kansas and Nebraska Officials

This week I met with Representative Tom Osborne (R-NE), Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline and Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning in Concordia to discuss Republican River water issues. The meeting was held to make certain Nebraska is complying with the settlement agreement that was finalized in 2003.

Kansas and Nebraska have come a long way in dealing with Republican River water issues. Representative Osborne and Attorney General Bruning confirmed that Nebraska producers are making a good faith effort to comply with the settlement agreement.

Congressman Osborne and I will be introducing legislation to authorize a study to take a comprehensive look at water supply, storage and management efficiency in the Lower Republican River basin between Harlan County Lake in Nebraska and Milford Lake in Kansas. I am glad to join him in looking at ways we can provide conservation measures to help ensure compliance in Nebraska and also make sure Kansas benefits. We also discussed federal conservation programs for reducing water usage, enhancing water flow and supporting the more efficient use of resources along the Republican River basin. Congressman Osborne and I previously worked together to pass legislation in December to assist farmers in the Bostwick irrigation district by extending payment schedules.

President Bush Discusses the War on Terror during Kansas State Landon Lecture

President George W. Bush delivered the 142nd Landon Lecture at Kansas State University last Monday. I was honored to meet the President at Forbes Field and accompany him to Manhattan for this prestigious lecture series. Some 9,000 people, including Ft. Riley soldiers and K-State students, faculty and staff, filled Bramlage Coliseum to hear President Bush.

K-State hosts the Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues in honor of the former Kansas governor and 1936 Republican Party nominee for president of the United States. President Bush is the third sitting president to visit K-State to deliver a Landon Lecture.

Honoring the Life of Kansas Leader Jordan Haines

This week I joined Senators Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback and former Senator Bob Dole at Grace Presbyterian Church in Wichita for the funeral services of Jordan Haines. Kansas lost a great leader with the passing of Mr. Haines. He was president of Bank IV and former Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents. I first met him when I was serving in the state senate and considered him a friend. My family's thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Mr. Haines during this difficult time.

Celebrating the 145th Birthday of Kansas

This weekend Robba and I joined Kansas leaders for Kansas Day activities to celebrate our state's birthday. During a banquet Saturday evening, I paid tribute to our troops, including State Representative Lee Tafanelli (R-Ozawkie) who recently returned from serving in Iraq. For full text of the speech, visit here:
http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/

sp012806SaluteTroops.html

Discussing Plans to Rebuild Railroad Track between Hutchinson and Wichita

This week I visited with Ed McKechnie of Watco Companies about plans to rebuild 42 miles of railroad track between Hutchinson and Wichita this year. Watco Companies, owner of the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad, will be utilizing federal tax credits I helped pass in 2004 specifically for improving short line railroads. Mr. McKechnie said the project will improve safety of the line and increase the speed of trains by 15 mph. This is an important line for the state of Kansas, especially the agriculture industry, as it transports about one-third of all Kansas wheat and numerous other products.

Attending the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet

On Wednesday evening, I attended the annual Salina Area Chamber of Commerce banquet. Ambassador John D. Negroponete, Director of National Intelligence for the United States, served as the keynote speaker and spoke about the War on Terror. Ambassador Negroponete previously served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from September 2001 until June 2004 and as U.S. ambassador to Iraq from June 2004 to April 2005.

Also at the banquet, Ross Hoffines of Harbin Construction Inc. was installed as the new board chairman for 2006. Kathy Reimold, Commercial Loan Officer at Sunflower Bank, was named 2005 Ambassador of the Year.

From Hope to Paradise: Changes in My Big First Listening Tour Schedule

As part of my Big First Tour, I was in Oakley, McPherson, Hillsboro, St. Francis and Goodland last week. This week I will make stops in Pretty Prairie in Reno County on Monday, Strong City in Chase County on Tuesday and Sylvan Grove in Lincoln County on Friday. The tour stops scheduled for Thursday, February 2, which included Nemaha, Marshall, Washington and Republic Counties, as well as Decatur and Norton Counties on Monday, February 6, have all been postponed due to a change in the voting schedule in Washington, D.C.

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

On Monday, Kansas Right to Life representatives visited the Capitol to advocate for pro-life legislation and the rights of the unborn, as well as to participate in the Right to Life March. Kansans included Audrey and Elmer Feldkamp of Baileyville, Judy Schuler of Ellis, Marilyn Malleck of Ness City, Loretta Flax of Ransom, Danika Flax of Roeland Park, John Seiler of Colwich, Fr. Andrew J. Seiler of Wellington, Chad Ingels of Manon, Mary Ann Freund and Margaret Mars

of Goddard, John Burke of Kansas City and Jackie Palic of Marion. With the group from Wichita were Nancy and Tracy Wyant, Amy Betzen, Alma Groner and David and Ann Betzen.

Head Start directors, parents and advocates were in my office this week to talk about the positive effects this program has on children and families. In with the group were Shirley Theurer of Wellington, Kay Mitchell of Hill City, Marty Roberts of Phillipsburg, Joseph Jackson of Hays, Corey Hensley of Salina and Mary Baskett of Shawnee. Head Start provides quality early childhood education, educates parents and is the largest health care provider in the nation.

Dr. Leo Pauls of Emporia was in representing the National Teachers Hall of Fame to talk about the Hall of Fame's history of honoring career teachers and to discuss ongoing efforts to make the Hall more well-known nationally. Sonny Rundell of Syracuse, John Farrell of Lenexa and Ron Johnson of Topeka were in Washington, D.C., this week participating in the International Migrant Education Conference and were in my office to discuss broadening federal guidelines to increase participation in the Migrant Education program. Also visiting my office in Washington, D.C., were Ralph and Norma Unger of Oberlin.

In my office this week for a tour of the Capitol building was Jacinta Faber of Yocemento with her daughter, Xan. Also touring the Capitol were students from Central Christian College in McPherson. The students included Laura Shirley, Alicia Hill, Sandy Miller, Katie Chaires, Eric Rostine, Staci Lovett, Josh Fischer, Paul Strain, Krissy Kuchman, Chase Moffitt, Sarah Chaires, Ginger Peebles and Keith Santos. The students' instructor, Rick Hill, accompanied them.

Very truly yours,

Jerry