

## 2/13/2006 This Week in Congress

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February 13, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

### Remembering Corporal Peter D. Wagler of Partridge

On Friday I joined the family and friends of Corporal Peter D. Wagler for funeral services at the First Church of the Nazarene in Hutchinson. Peter, 18, died on January 23 in Iraq due to injuries sustained when an explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He had been in Iraq since December.

Hundreds of members of the Patriot Guard arrived in Hutchinson on their motorcycles to pay tribute to a hero - a fallen soldier. At the request of the family, the Patriot Guard serves as a buffer between families and protestors.

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I was heartened by Peter's story and the strength of his family. Though young, Peter had lived his 18 years to the fullest,

as was shared by everyone speaking on his behalf. His family's faith and peace with Peter's commitment to service was uplifting.

Peter followed the call to serve his country and made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom. His dedication is a humbling example to all Americans. The loss of this young man is felt throughout our communities. My heart goes out to the Wagler family on the loss of Peter. He will not be forgotten.

### Calling on Congress to Alter the Administration's Budget Proposal

The Administration proposed an ambitious fiscal year 2007 budget on Monday, with the goal of reducing our nation's deficit by half over the next three years. While I applaud the President for recognizing the need to reduce spending, there are certain aspects of the proposed budget which are negligent. I continue to believe that we must not saddle future generations with the debt we acquire today, but we cannot balance the books by singling out programs that are important to rural areas like Kansas.

### Agriculture

Nearly \$9 billion in cuts to agriculture over the next ten years are being proposed, including changes to dairy programs, crop payments and marketing loans. These proposed cuts to agriculture do not come at a good time. Kansas farmers are currently weathering a storm of high energy prices, continued drought and low commodity prices.

### Veterans

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), R. James Nicholson, joined the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs this week to discuss the Administration's proposal to establish enrollment fees and increase prescription drug co-payments for veterans in the VA's Priority Groups 7 and 8. These groups include veterans who have incomes above a certain level and do not have service-related disabilities. Veterans have done a great service for our country, and they deserve the best health care available, not higher prices. With troops returning from battle and the aging veteran population, now is certainly not the time to unduly burden our nation's veterans.

## Health Care

I am disappointed in the Administration's desire to reduce rural health care programs by \$133 million and cut \$136 million from health professional training programs that are critical to rural America. Rural areas have special circumstances, and rural health programs must remain in place to continue addressing issues like health professional shortages, challenges faced by small hospitals and problems that stem from having a less-dense population.

The Administration submitting a budget to Congress is the first step in the 2007 federal funding process. In the coming months, Congress will review this proposal and work to finalize next year's budget.

## House Agriculture Committee Launches Farm Bill Field Hearings

I traveled with the House Agriculture Committee this week for Farm Bill field hearings in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Auburn, Alabama. These were the first of a series of field hearings scheduled to take place across the country to review the 2002 Farm Bill and allow producers to share what is working well and what can be improved in the next Farm Bill in 2007.

Both hearings were well attended by community members, local producers and agriculture officials, with about 135 people in North Carolina and about 200 in Alabama. It was good to hear from producers in the southeast about issues important to the region. In addition to livestock and grain, we heard from specialty crop producers about everything from onions and peanuts to trees and grapes. Agriculture does not face political lines as much as it does geographical lines. These hearings are important because they allow me to learn about the diverse agriculture interests outside of Kansas.

The next two hearings will be March 3 and 4 in Stockton, California, and Nebraska City, Nebraska. The remaining full committee field hearings are still being scheduled, as are those of the subcommittee I chair on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. I look forward to working to develop policies in the new 2007 Farm Bill that will benefit Kansas farmers and ranchers.

Calling for Earmark - "Pork" - Reform

This week I sponsored legislation to put accountability back in the spending process. Recently, one use of taxpayer dollars - earmarks - has been under much scrutiny. Earmarks, often called pork, are funding requests made by lawmakers for pet projects in their home states. The cost to taxpayers for these projects was \$27 billion last year.

This legislation forces earmarks to be included in the actual text of a spending bill, not in attached reports that cannot be amended. This provides legislators with an opportunity to evaluate and remove frivolous earmarks, which will reduce bloated spending bills and allow legislation to be passed based on merit rather than arm twisting. This also diminishes the ability of lobbyists to get earmarks that serve special interests at the public's expense.

The American people deserve to know how their money is being spent, and elected representatives deserve the opportunity to advocate for responsible uses of taxpayer dollars.

For the full text of an editorial I wrote on this issue, please visit: [http://www.house.gov/apps/list/hearing/ks01\\_moran/oped021006EarmarkReform.html](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/hearing/ks01_moran/oped021006EarmarkReform.html).

Introducing Legislation for the Eisenhower Memorial in Washington, D.C.

This week I introduced legislation for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial in Washington, D.C. A four-acre section near the Department of Education has been designated for the memorial, and congressional site approval is the first step in making this tribute a reality.

I serve on the Eisenhower Commission, which was formed in 1999 to promote the legacy of President Eisenhower. President Eisenhower is one of Kansas' most famous sons. His remarkable career in public service and legacy of protecting our country and the American people is most deserving of a memorial in our nation's capital.

Accepting Applications for Summer 2006 Internships

I am now accepting applications for congressional internships in my Washington, D.C., Hays, Hutchinson and Salina offices for the summer 2006 term. The goal of the congressional internship is to give young adults the opportunity to participate in public service. Summer internships are flexible but generally run in two sessions, the first from mid-May to June 30 and the second from July 5 to mid-August.

Applications for the summer are due by March 17. To apply for an internship, students should submit a completed application form, cover letter, résumé, college transcript and three letters of reference. The cover letter should explain their interest in public service and the goals they hope to achieve by participating. Preference is given to students who are residents of the First Congressional District and have completed at least two years of college.

Students may call (202) 225-2715 with questions or to obtain more information. Application forms are available online at: <http://www.house.gov/moranks01/internweb.htm>.

From Hope to Paradise: Continuing My Big First Listening Tour

As part of my Big First Tour, I was in Leoti, Tribune and Sharon Springs last week. I also visited the community of Marienthal. This evening I will be Madison in Greenwood County at the Sauder Community Building on Main Street from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tomorrow morning I will be in Emporia in Lyon County. On Monday, February 20, I will be in St. John in Stafford County and Great Bend in Barton County.

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

## Problems Resolved with Loan Deficiency Payments in Kansas

I was notified that Kansas producers were having difficulty receiving Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for 2005 crops after confusing changes were made to LDP forms last year. After working with USDA officials, I am pleased to inform producers that a solution has been reached.

The problem occurred when many producers were denied an LDP after only filling out page one of the two-page LDP form (CCC-633 EZ). USDA will now give LDPs to those producers who only filled out the first page. For more details and information about this recent development, I recommend that affected producers contact their county FSA offices.

## In the Office

Representatives from the Kansas Association of School Boards were in my office this week to discuss the President's proposed budget for education, possible improvements for No Child Left Behind, vouchers and the E-Rate program. With the group were Carol Massieon of Seneca, Rodney Roush of Stafford, Keith Becker of Galva, Mary Anne Trickle of Salina, Pam Gruber of Hope and Jim Edwards of Topeka.

Kansas State University representatives were in my office to talk about their 2006 legislative priorities. Representatives were Fred Cholick, Steven Graham, Terry King, Marty Vanier, Dick Hayter, Ralph Richardson, Steve White, Dennis Kuhlman, David Franz, Virginia Moxley and Sue Peterson. Suzanne Bollig of Hays and Meg Trumpp of Wichita were in representing the Kansas Respiratory Care Society to discuss Medicare coverage for respiratory care.

In representing the Kansas National League of Postmasters were Eileen Arnhold of Russell, Ernie Montgomery of Effingham, Judy Smith of Muscotah, Randy Caprez of Russell, Janet Havnen of Troy, Delores Servaes of Atchison and Judy Raney of Lawrence, who talked about issues related to postal reform.

This week I attended an event hosted by the Kansas Association of Community College Trustees where representatives from many of the 19 community colleges in Kansas were present. I spoke with the group about recent legislative action and my continued support for financial aid programs and also career and technical education programs under the Carl D. Perkins Act. Several representatives also visited my office to follow up on these education issues including Dr. Carol Ballantyne, Dr. Lauren Welch and Terri Worf of Garden City Community College. Dr. Ed Berger and Bud Janner of Hutchinson Community College were also in, as were Catherine Durham and Mary Ann Flunder of Kansas City Kansas Community College.

In with the Kansas Council on Developmental Disability were Jane Rhys of Topeka, Sara Sack of Parsons, Elizabeth Guerrero of Kansas City and Betty Unruh of Wichita to discuss federal funding for programs affecting people with developmental disabilities as well as the upcoming reauthorization of the Developmental Disabilities Act.

Brigadier General George Harris and Colonel Gary Major of the 89th Regional Readiness Command (RRC) were in my office to provide an update on U.S. Army Reserve activities in Kansas. The 89th RRC is headquartered in Wichita and is responsible for Army Reserve units in Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska, supporting a total of more than 10,000 soldiers. It consistently rates among the best RRCs in the country for unit readiness.

Larry Schmidt of Junction City was in with the Seven Rivers Coalition to discuss efforts to provide extra funding to school districts facing large influxes of students due to the recent Base Realignment and Closure process. Junction City and the Ft. Riley area will see an addition of about 7,000 students over the next two years, which means the school district will need additional resources for support programs, hiring more teachers and building more classrooms. He was joined by representatives from Ft. Benning in Columbus, Georgia, and Ft. Lee in Fort Lee, Virginia.

Sam Robinson and Rod Barnes of Junction City were in my office to talk about legislation to increase housing opportunities for Ft. Riley soldiers moving into the Junction City area. Elmer Ronnebaum of Seneca and Dennis Schwartz of Tecumseh were in the office with the Kansas Rural Water Association to discuss funding needs for rural wastewater facilities, rural water utilities and the effects of the Environmental Protection Agency regulations on rural water treatment plants.

Tiffani Kirk of Sharon Springs, Christy Hopkins of Tribune, Carolyn Burns of Pittsburg, Stanton Janssen of Lorraine and Jeff Hofaker of Phillipsburg were in to visit about projects the Resource Conservation and Development councils are involved in across the State of Kansas and their need for continued financial support. Wendy Webb of Stillwell and Dr. Janet Crow of Easton were in with Kansas Parents As Teachers to discuss parent education programs that focus on educating parents while their children are infants or preschoolers. They also discussed federal funding for Parents As Teachers programs that work with military families.

Also this week, I attended an event hosted by the National Guard Association of Kansas. In attendance were Major General Tod Bunting, Adjutant General of the Kansas National Guard, and several other Guard leaders and Association members. I enjoyed the opportunity to thank these men and women for their service and learn more about current issues and future plans for the Kansas National Guard. Kansas Guardsmen Lieutenant Colonel Tony DeJesus and Lieutenant Colonel Derek Rogers later stopped by my office to further discuss Guard issues in Kansas.

Very truly yours,

Jerry