

4/17/2006 This Week in Congress

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April 17, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

USDA Extends CRP Sign-Up Deadline by Two Weeks

On Thursday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the extension of the April 14 sign-up deadline for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that are set to expire in 2007. USDA will be extending the re-enrollment, extension, and general sign-up deadline by two weeks.

I asked USDA for this extension when misinterpretation of controlled burning and managed haying and grazing regulations caused confusion and concern among Kansas producers. At my request, the issues are being corrected; however, information was not going to be available to producers in sufficient time before the April 14 sign-up deadline.

Extension of this deadline is critical to allow producers to make informed decisions. The availability of haying and grazing practices is important to Kansas producers and can strongly influence decisions to extend or re-enroll CRP contracts.

Producers should contact their local Farm Service Agency office for more information.

Dedicating Marysville's Overpass, Flood Control and Railroad Relocation Project

On Monday, I attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony to dedicate Marysville's overpass, flood control and railroad track relocation project. About 70 trains go through Marysville on a daily basis. Moving the tracks to the outskirts of town allows trains to operate more efficiently and run faster. This project gives Union Pacific the capacity to handle the increased traffic and demand for business now and in the future. The creation of the overpass and levees are important for the community's safety in being able to get a fire truck or ambulance from one part of town to the other, as well as helping with flood problems.

This project was made possible by the award-winning partnership among the city of Marysville, the Kansas Department of Transportation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Union Pacific who worked together to find a solution to traffic and flood problems. More than 200 people attended the event and heard from Dick Davidson, Chairman of Union Pacific; Deb Miller, Kansas Secretary of Transportation; Lieutenant Colonel Kelly Butler, Army Corps of Engineers; Lou Edwards, Marysville Mayor; and Harold Stones, Office of Senator Pat Roberts.

This was the first designated funding project I was successful in obtaining as a member of Congress and now we get to see the results. This is an important investment in the economic viability of this community and is one more example of the good things happening in Marshall County and the bright future for this part of Kansas.

Recognizing Palco Residents with "Building Better Communities" Award

This weekend, I recognized the citizens of Palco with my "Building Better Communities" award for their long-term efforts to sustain and revitalize their community. The citizens of Palco, town of 235 people, have taken action to ensure their community continues to be home to another generation of Kansans and, in the last decade, have invested more than \$3 million in their community.

Several local projects have made a positive contribution to the community. Jobs have been added to the Palco economy through expansion and development of local businesses, including a bank and a service station and body repair shop. Palco residents have access to needed health care services thanks to a 2004 project to renovate and open the Palco Medical Clinic. Grocery and food services have been maintained through new ownership of the local grocery store and the remodeling of a local restaurant. Government services were enhanced with the construction of a new city building that includes a city office, ambulance service and fire department. Other local projects have included a new sewer plant, a new city street near the downtown area and now plans for a local day care facility.

I established the "Building Better Communities" award to showcase positive community action in Kansas. Beyond providing recognition, this program provides examples of how creative thinking and teamwork make a positive difference in rural America. To read the full speech I presented to the U.S. House of Representatives, visit:
http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/

sp030706BBCPalco.html

Commemorating the 125th Anniversary of the Messiah Festival in Lindsborg

Yesterday, Robba and I traveled to Lindsborg for the 125th Messiah Festival. The community has been celebrating Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday by performing Handel's "The Messiah" since the late 1800s. As the Messiah Festival tradition has grown, so has the town of Lindsborg and Bethany College.

I recently gave a speech to the House commemorating the festival and its contributions to the community of Lindsborg and state of Kansas. I presented the speech to the President of Bethany College, Paul Formo, before the performance. Lindsborg demonstrates how collaboration, a rich cultural heritage and appreciation for beautiful music can create a tradition worthy of 125 years of repeating. For full text of the speech, visit:

http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/

sp040406MessiahFestival.html

Speaking to Salina Rotary and Visiting Salina Businesses

This week, I spent time in Salina speaking to Rotary Club members during their Monday noon meeting and visiting local businesses. I visited with the Salina Rotarians about several current issues, including the Republican River and the contamination at the former Schilling Air Force Base.

Also while in the area, I made stops at the Smokey Hill Winery, Veris Technologies, Great Plains Manufacturing, and a meeting of the Kansas Farm Bill Coalition. At Great Plains Manufacturing, I visited with president Roy Applequist about the company's vertical tillage systems. Great Plains, which employs more than 800 people throughout the state, manufactures planting, seeding, tillage and spraying equipment. I went by Smoky Hill Vineyard and Winery to congratulate Norm and Jen Jennings and Kay Bloom on their recent building and renovation expansion project. Smoky Hill Vineyard and Winery was established in 1991 and has grown from producing about an acre of vines to now thousands of vines that make ten varieties of grapes.

I also stopped by Veris Technologies where I met Eric Lund and Paul Drummond. Veris manufactures precision agriculture equipment that tests the composition of soil. Eric's son, Tyler, works in my Washington, D.C., office. On my way home, I stopped by a meeting of the Kansas Farm Bill Coalition being held outside of Salina at Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure where representatives from various Kansas agriculture organizations were meeting to discuss the 2007 Farm Bill.

New Development Provides Affordable Housing for Ellis County Residents

I joined residents and city, county and state officials in Ellis this weekend for the dedication of the first phase of a new housing development. One mile of paved streets and 50 lots have been added to the city of Ellis in the first phase of the Southridge development project. By the end of the third phase of the project, 250 lots will be created. This is a worthwhile project as it is providing affordable housing for Ellis county residents and attracting new people to the area.

Visiting Cloud Ceramics in Concordia and Reading to Minneapolis Third Graders

On Tuesday, I spent time in Concordia and Minneapolis. I visited Cloud Ceramics in Concordia where Jim Winter showed me around their new plant. Cloud Ceramics uses clay from the area to make bricks. Jim's daughter, Jamie, is currently interning in my Washington, D.C., office.

In honor of National Library week, I stopped in Minneapolis to read to the third grade classes of Mrs. Julie Pieschl and Mrs. Cheryl Smith. Thank you to the teachers and the grade school principal, Mrs. Pat Anderson, for the opportunity to visit with these young students about the importance of reading.

In the Office

Kansans in my office for tours this week included Loren and Lynette Stenzel of Ness City, Christopher Birkhead and Susan Feltman of McPherson, Debbie Baerg of Inman and Fred Dreiling of Victoria. The sophomore and junior classes from Cuba's Hillcrest High School visited my office and also took a tour of the Capitol building. Also in Washington, D.C., this week and touring the Capitol were Steve and Andrew Stottlemyer and Deanna Thompson, all of Hugoton.

Very truly yours,

Jerry