

## 8/10/2009 This Week in Congress

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August 10, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." As Congress's August recess began this week, I was able to travel throughout Kansas. I am grateful for the opportunity to visit with Kansans around the state. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Requesting President Obama Tour Fort Leavenworth

I began this week early Monday morning in Leavenworth with Senator Sam Brownback and Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins at a press conference to speak against the transfer of terrorist detainees from the Guantanamo Bay detention facility to the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth. Later this week, I joined members of the Kansas Congressional Delegation in requesting President Barack Obama tour Fort Leavenworth. I strongly oppose the transfer of terrorist detainees from Guantanamo Bay detention facility to the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth. By extending this invitation to the President and his administration, I hope they take this opportunity to see, first hand, that Fort Leavenworth is inappropriate to house terrorist detainees.

to house terrorist suspects. Fort Leavenworth is also home to the Command and General Staff College and is known as the "Intellectual Center of the Army." This is a facility where leaders of our military and military leaders from other countries are educated. Transferring terrorists to the fort would disrupt Fort Leavenworth's primary mission of military education and discourage foreign students from attending the college. [Click here to read the joint request from the Kansas congressional delegation to President Obama.](#)

#### Leavenworth Selected for Consolidated Patient Account Center

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) selected Leavenworth's Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center Campus to be the new location of a VA Consolidated Patient Account Center for the Central Plains Region. This announcement is a proud moment for this community as Leavenworth County and city officials have worked hard to bring the center to the area.

Soon after visiting the Leavenworth VA campus, I contacted the VA Chief of Staff in July to emphasize why Leavenworth was the best fit for this center, and I am glad the VA made the right decision. Not only does the decision prove to be a victory for improved veterans' health care management, it is also a welcome boost for the economy of northeast Kansas. [Click here to read more.](#)

#### Touring Southeast Kansas Hospitals

Currently, we stand at an important juncture in our health care system. While I am glad Congress did not rush to pass health care reform legislation before the August break, this topic will be front and center when we return in September. As Chair of the House Rural Health Care Coalition, it is valuable for me to visit hospitals to learn Kansans' thoughts on health care reform.

Mercy Hospital of Kansas Independence: On Thursday, I traveled to Montgomery County to visit Mercy Hospital of Kansas Independence. The facility located in Independence is a non-profit, short-term hospital that has one specialty unit and 53 beds. During my visit, I toured the hospital and met with members of the staff. Thanks to John Woodrich, hospital CEO, and the hospital staff and administrators for taking me on the tour. Also thanks to Karen Endicott-Coyan, for inviting me. [Click here to view a photo from my visit.](#)

Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center: On Friday, I visited Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center (MCRMC) in Pittsburg to visit with administrators and tour hospital facilities. This medical center has 103 beds. The medical center has been operating in southeast Kansas for more than a century, and in the past 10 years, has been fully engaged in growth and expansion. This includes the recent addition of a \$16.5 million outpatient addition with a new surgery center, emergency department and state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab.

During my visit, I observed the ICU/Cardiac Step-Down Unit/Heart Center, MCRMC Cancer Center and a demonstration of Patient Monitor. I also observed tele-medicine equipment that allows patients and physicians to consult with oncologists from the University of Kansas Cancer Center through teleconference. We also talked about ways for the hospital to overcome the current 340B plan deficiency - a plan where hospitals are compensated for medicine at a rate relating to its number of Medicaid hours.

Thank you to: Jonathan Davis, President/CEO; Drew Talbott, Vice President of Operations; Julianna Rieschick, CNO/Vice President of Patient Care; Dr. Robert Huebner, Cancer Committee Chairman; Lisa Lovell, Certified Tumor Registrar; Dr. Gary Doolittle, Midwest Cancer Alliance Medical Director; Dr. Mickey Xun, Mt. Carmel Cancer Center Medical Oncologist; Dr. Richard Jacobs, Mt. Carmel Cancer Center Radiation Oncologist; and Karen Wells, Mt. Carmel Cancer Center Director.

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Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center: Also on Friday, I traveled to Chanute to visit the Neosho Memorial Regional

Medical Center. This non-profit, county-owned Critical Access Hospital (CAH) has 24 beds. The hospital has specialists in obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, orthopedics, pediatrics, general surgery and urology. It serves 45,000 people across a five county area. The medical center is currently undergoing a \$20 million dollar renovation project creating all new patient care areas including a new Emergency Department, Inpatient Unit, Intensive Care Unit, Outpatient Observation Unit, and Nutrition Services Department.

During my visit, I learned that Neosho Memorial serves as a rural teaching facility for seven college programs, including future physicians undergoing medical training. I talked about the unique challenges faced by rural hospitals and the important role they play in rural communities.

Thanks to Dennis E. Franks, CEO, for leading the tour. Also thanks to Patricia Morris, Communications, Planning & Development Director, for inviting me on the tour.

## Veterans Care

Kansas Veterans' Home: On Thursday, I stopped in Winfield to visit with veterans living at the Kansas Veterans' Home. The 347 bed facility, which opened in 2000, is home to veterans with active federal service. It is Kansas' second home for retired servicemen and women. The facility offers veterans transportation to and from local health care providers, including the Robert J. Dole Veterans Administration Medical and Regional Office Center at Wichita. I talked with Superintendent Jim Hays concerning federal and state funding.

Dole VA Medical Center: Also on Thursday, I traveled to Wichita to meet with Tom Sanders, the Medical Director for the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center (VAMC). The Dole VAMC in Wichita has been serving Kansas area veterans for more than 75 years. During my visit, Mr. Sanders and I discussed VA hospitals and veterans medical care services. I also discussed issues with Ronald Garrett, Supervisor of Patient Benefits and Dr. Kent Murray, the Chief of Medical Staff.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, it is essential that Congress continues to support quality care for our veterans. It is always a privilege to speak with Mr. Sanders about VA issues.

### Listening and Learning from Kansans

**Kansas Electric Cooperative:** On Monday, I spoke at the Kansas Electric Cooperative (KEC) annual meeting in Overland Park. The meeting was comprised of KEC managers and directors from across the state. The group shared with me their concerns with Cap and Trade legislation and recent developments with Sunflower Electric's plan to build a new coal fired plant at Holcomb. I also discussed how storms in the last year caused wide-spread damage across the state of Kansas. I have appreciated the opportunities to work alongside both KEC and FEMA to restore services to Kansas customers as quickly as possible.

**Garnett Rotary Club:** On Tuesday, I joined fellow Rotarians in Garnett. As a member of the Hays Rotary Club, I enjoy having the opportunity to talk with community leaders about the issues that are making an impact in their area. Civic clubs, such as Rotary, provide valuable leadership in helping make the places we call home better. Thanks to Michael Burns for his hospitality.

**Salina Tri-Rivers Fair and Parade:** In Salina Wednesday, I joined area residents at the Tri-Rivers Fair and rode in the parade that kicked off the 5-day event. The Tri-Rivers Fair featured a carnival, rodeo, draft horse show, demolition derby and other events. While at the fair, I saw Christopher Arpin and Elizabeth Peuchen be crowned the 4-H King and Queen of the Fair. I enjoyed visiting with folks around the fair grounds and being in the parade. Thanks to Richard Morrison for driving me in the parade.

Winfield Kiwanis Club: On Thursday, I made a stop at the Winfield Kiwanis Club meeting to speak with approximately 45 members. I was able to talk to members and guest about several topics that will be on the national agenda when Congress reconvenes. Overall, the discussion remained mostly on health care. I always enjoy meeting with Kiwanis members in Kansas. Thanks to Ed Foster for inviting me to speak. Also thanks to Glenn Sandbolte, the club president.

Southeast Kansas, Inc.: I was invited by Southeast Kansas, Inc. to conduct a town hall with the residents of Parsons on Thursday. Southeast Kansas, Inc. is a group of business and governmental leaders that mobilize leadership and resources to create an economic development opportunity. They represent manufacturing, retail, and service businesses along with county and city governments from 13 counties in southeast Kansas. During the town hall, I discussed key topics and answered questions regarding transportation, tourism, health care and workforce and economic development.

Thanks to Parsons' and area residents for participating in the town hall meeting.

Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce: On Friday, I attended the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce "First Friday Coffee". During the event, I spoke with business leaders and was able to hear from them about some of their concerns. Health care was a prominent topic of conversation. I appreciated the opportunity to join area residents for the event. Thanks to Dr. Steve Scott, Pittsburg State University President, for hosting the breakfast. Thanks also to Blake Benson, Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce President; Mark Werner, Chamber Chairman of the Board; and State Senator Bob Marshall, for welcoming me.

Discussing NBAF with Mike Adams of AgriTalk

This week, I was invited by Mike Adams, the host of AgriTalk radio, to talk about the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) during his show. The NBAF will upgrade disease research to better protect humans, livestock and the U.S. food supply. I participated in a discussion, along with Tom Thorton, CEO of the Kansas BioScience Authority, about the reasons Manhattan, Kansas, is the best location to house the new state of the art laboratory. [Click here to listen to this discussion.](#)

### Discussing Kansas Transportation Issues

APAC: On Monday, I was in Olathe to meet with executives of APAC (Ashland Paving and Construction) to discuss transportation issues. APAC is owned by Oldcastle Companies - the leading producers of a wide range of building materials, including primary materials, precast concrete and architectural products, fabricated glass and concrete construction and fencing products. During the meeting, I discussed the transportation legislation that is pending in the House of Representatives. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

Highway 69 Association: On Friday, I met with members of the Hwy. 69 Association in Pittsburg. The Highway 69 Association is working to expand U.S. 69 from two lanes to four lanes. During the meeting, it was emphasized that Kansans depend upon our infrastructure. I also discussed the transportation legislation that is pending in the House of Representatives.

Thank you to Blake Benson, Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce President, for inviting me to attend the meeting. Also thank you to Ken Brock, Highway 69 Association President; Dr. Jim AuBuchon, Executive Director of the Highway 69 Association; Vicki Pritchett, President of the Fort Scott Chamber of Commerce; Jim Zaleski, Labette County CVB director and delegate from the Highway 400 Association; Ed McKechnie, Watco Chief Commercial Officer; Pam Henderson, Pittsburg City Commissioner; and State Senator Bob Marshall of Fort Scott.

## Annual Listening Tour Continues

During the month of August, I will be traveling around Kansas conducting town hall tour stops. This week, I visited the Sauder Community Center in Madison for my Greenwood County town hall tour stop. At the town hall, I discussed the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), No Child Left Behind, irresponsible government spending, my opposition to Cap and Trade legislation and health care reform. [Click here](#) to view the listening tour schedule and the areas I have stopped this year.

Below is a list of my upcoming town hall tour stops in the month of August:

Thursday, August 13

McPherson County Tour Stop, Lindsborg

Time: 12:30 to 1:30 PM

Location: City Hall

Room: Council Room

Address: 121 S. Main

Marion County Tour Stop, Hillsboro

Time: 2:30 to 3:30 PM CST

Location: Wolhgemuth Music Education Center lobby, Tabor College

Address: 400 South Jefferson Street

Chase County Tour Stop, Cottonwood Falls

Time: 4:30 to 5:30 PM

Location: The Emporium

Address: 220 1/2 Broadway

Tuesday, August 18

Morton County Tour Stop, Elkhart

Time: 7:30 to 8:30 AM

Location: Morton County Civic Center

Address: 400 E. Orchard

Stevens County Tour Stop, Hugoton

Time: 9:15 to 10:15 AM

Location: Common Grounds

Address: 531 S. Main Street

Seward County Tour Stop, Liberal

Time: 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Location: Chamber of Commerce

Address: 4 Rock Island Road

In the Office

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including David Boyle and Aneta Willson of Wilson, Monty and Laura Noland of Seneca, Rick and Kimberly Roberts of Junction City and Laurie Benda of St. George. In from Smith Center were John, Amy, Trenton and Kale Terril and Robert, Staci, Mason and Rece Buckmaster. Also in for a tour from Hays were Bill and Megan Zeman and Lauren Scott.

Very truly yours,

Jerry