

5/22/2006 This Week in Congress

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May 22, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Due to the Memorial Day holiday, next week's edition of "This Week in Congress" will be sent on Tuesday, May 30. I wish you a safe and enjoyable Memorial Day weekend. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Introducing Measures to Increase Availability of Alternative Fuels for Consumers

This week, I highlighted the Alternative Energy Refueling System Act of 2006 in a press conference in Washington, D.C., with Senator John Thune (R-SD), Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) and Senator Jim Talent (R-MO), as well as representatives from DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, the Renewable Fuels Association, and the National Corn Growers Association. Congressman Mark Udall (D-CO) and I introduced this legislation last week in an effort to reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil. H.R. 5346 would provide incentives for gas station owners to install alternative fuel tanks to provide greater access to fuels containing ethanol, bio-diesel, compressed natural gas or hydrogen.

Flexible Fuel Vehicles were onsite for the event and automakers discussed the increasing number of these vehicles being manufactured. With more Flexible Fuel Vehicles on America's roads, there is a significant need for more refueling sites across the country. Currently, of the 180,000 gas stations across the country, less than one percent offer alternative fuels such as E-85. In Kansas, alternative fuels are offered at about a dozen stations.

Encouraging gas station owners to install alternative refueling systems will give more American consumers the ability to refuel their vehicles with alternative fuels that are better for the environment and our nation's security. We have crops growing in our backyard here in America that can help decrease our dependence on foreign oil. This legislation is a necessary step in improving our infrastructure to make alternative energy sources available at the pump.

For a news clip on the press conference, you can visit Topeka's 49 ABC News website at: <http://www.49abcnews.com/videos/2006/may/18/2815/>. More details about this legislation are available on my website at: http://www.house.gov/list/press/ks01_moran/

[pr051206AltEnergyRefuelingSysAct.html](#).

President Bush Addresses the Nation about Immigration Reform

President Bush addressed the nation from the oval office on Monday where he gave his views on immigration reform. Securing our borders must be our first priority and I am glad that the President recognizes that doing so is the "basic responsibility of a sovereign nation." Many of the border security measures that the President called for are already contained in the immigration bill the House passed in December.

In the speech, President Bush called for 6,000 National Guard troops to assist U.S. border control agents. I am concerned that our National Guard is already spread thin and a new mission could be challenging. I also believe that those who came here illegally should not be granted amnesty. The immigration bill that is signed into law should primarily focus on border security and address problems in our current immigration system, such as reforming the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services bureau. Reducing the bureaucratic red-tape that immigrants must go through will allow more people who wish to come into our country to do so legally.

Continuing Efforts to Improve the Effects of Medicare Part D

Despite problems within the Medicare Prescription Drug benefit, the deadline to enroll in the program came and went last Monday. This week, I continued my efforts to address these problems. Those seniors who missed the May 15 enrollment deadline now face a permanent penalty fee and are unable to sign up for a program until November. I have sponsored legislation to waive the penalty fee for the remainder of 2006 for seniors enrolling after May 15.

All across the United States, pharmacies are struggling to keep their doors open due to the changes the prescription drug plan has brought about. Pharmacists have not been receiving payments in a timely manner and have reported losses on filling many reimbursed prescriptions. I recently introduced H.R. 5182, the Fair and Speedy Treatment (FAST) of Claims Act of 2006, to help local pharmacies navigate the complex drug program and make sure they are not forced out of business by the inadequate, slow and unclear claims process.

I have been concerned with the drug benefit since it was first introduced. These are two necessary steps Congress must take to lessen the negative effects this program has had on Kansas seniors and local pharmacists.

Funding Approved for Veterans' Medical Care

Each year Congress approves funding for federal programs. This week, the House approved funding for the National Park Service, as well as veterans' and military construction programs. The 2007 Military Quality of Life Appropriations will provide increased funding for veterans' medical care. This legislation recognizes our country's commitment to care for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and our aging veteran population by increasing veterans' medical services 11.5 percent from last year.

My colleagues and I were also successful in blocking the Administration's proposal to increase prescription drug co-payments and establish enrollment fees for veterans receiving Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care in Priority Groups 7 and 8. These groups include veterans who have incomes above a certain level and do not have service-related disabilities.

While it is important for Congress to hold the line on spending, I am glad to see we are making veterans a priority. Our veterans stepped up in times of need to protect our nation and it is our turn to look out for them. They deserve the best health care available.

I will be recognizing veterans in a speech this weekend in White City where the community is dedicating a veterans memorial. Also, next Tuesday I am hosting my seventh veterans' forum in Marion to discuss health care and benefits provided by the VA. Officials from the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center and Regional Office will join me to hear the thoughts and concerns of veterans. The event will be Tuesday, May 30, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Marion VFW Post #6958, 420 W. Santa Fe. All area veterans and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Visiting Flint Hills Community Health Clinic, Speaking about J-1 Visa Program

I visited the Flint Hills Community Health Clinic in Emporia this week to meet with employees and supporters of the center and to tour the facility with executive director Lougene Marsh. This health clinic has an important component with its own dental health department. I was also able to see the primary care unit and women's and public health departments. I am supportive of our Kansas community health centers and the work they do to help and serve others.

While there, I discussed my concerns with the rising cost of health care. I also visited about the J-1 Visa waiver program, which allows foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to serve in areas that have a shortage of physicians. I also testified this week before the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims about H.R. 4997, the Physicians for Underserved Areas Act, which would permanently reauthorize the J-1 Visa waiver program. While roughly a quarter of people reside in rural areas, only 10 percent of physicians practice there. H.R. 4997 is vital to ensuring Kansans have access to health care.

Attending Chapel Service and Visiting with Students at Emporia Christian School

Also while in Emporia, I had the opportunity to visit with students and teachers at Emporia Christian School (ECS). The kindergarten through eighth grade school educates nearly 100 students. While at ECS, I visited with seventh and eighth grade students about civic responsibility, the role of Congress and the No Child Left Behind Act. I also attended the morning Chapel service. I appreciated the students' prayers and the comfort that comes from knowing that Kansans are praying for me. Thanks to Principal Jim Sanborn and Mrs. Sherilyn Stewart for the chance to meet with their students.

Touring the Council Grove Water Treatment Plant with Kiwanis Members

This week, I joined the Kiwanis Club in Council Grove for a tour of the local water treatment plant. The city of Council Grove's primary water source is a 434-acre, city-owned lake five miles northwest of town. Lake water flows to the city water treatment plant for a population of more than 2,300. The original water treatment plant was constructed in 1933. The most recent improvements to the facility have eliminated nearly all taste and odor issues. I enjoyed joining club members for the tour and learning about the facility and its recent improvements.

Speaking to Olpe Lions Club Members and Guests

On Monday evening, I joined members of the Lions Club for their meeting at the famous Olpe Chicken House. It was a wonderful meal and I spoke to about 35 members and guests about current issues, including immigration, No Child Left Behind and energy policy. I appreciated the hospitality of the club and community members.

Speaking to the Accomplishments of the Hays High School Class of 2006

This weekend, I helped the Hays High School Class of 2006 celebrate graduation. My daughter was one of the 217 graduates. I attended the baccalaureate, spoke at the graduation ceremony, and volunteered at Project Graduation, which is an evening of fun activities for departing graduates. I spoke to the accomplishments of this class. Of those graduating seniors continuing their education, 72 percent received scholarships.

Graduation is a time of celebration for both the young adults and also for the community - the parents, teachers, and

local organizations who each play an important role in helping these students reach this special point in life. I wish all graduating seniors much continued success and happiness.

In the Office

Representatives of the Air Traffic Controllers Association, Connie Presley, Patrick Pelkowski and John Ojile of Wichita, were in the office this week to give me an update on the current negotiations between the Air Traffic Controllers Union and the Federal Aviation Administration on a new collective bargaining agreement. Larry Sevier of Lenora, Richard Veach and Catherine Moyer of Ulysses, Archie Macias of Udall, Pat Morse of Dodge City, Carl Krehbiel of Moundridge and Tom Gleason of Lawrence were in representing the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies. The group discussed issues important to small rural telecommunications companies and reiterated the need to make sure funding for the Universal Service Fund, which provides money to rural areas to help offer more access to telecommunications services, is adequate.

Mary Ann Mann of Salina, Linda DeCoursey of Topeka and Kevin Walker of Olathe were in the office with the American Stroke Association to advocate for increased research funding for prevention and treatment of heart disease and strokes. American College of Physicians representatives, James Gardner of Manhattan, Donald Hattan of Lawrence and Angel Mayorga May of Shawnee, stopped by to discuss Medicare reimbursement rates and the potential shortage in Primary Care Internalists. Mari Tucker of Topeka, Brian and Brenda Byrd of Overland Park, and Beckie Cooper of Fairway were in the office to describe the need for a national registry for Lou Gehrig's disease and to advocate for increased research and designation by the Department of Defense.

Also this week, I met with the Kansas Association of Realtors to discuss several issues affecting real estate and housing policy in Kansas, including small business health plans, tax reform, and natural disaster insurance. In with the group were Luke Bell of Lawrence; Delores Dalke of Hillsboro; Karen Gehle, Diane Green, Debbie Davis and Connie Goodnow of Topeka; Sue Wenger, Penny Johnson and Dennis Johnson of Wichita; Pat Tholen of Leawood; Cherise Sedlock of Kansas City; Lee McClelland of Overland Park; Rob Curtis of Olathe and Carol Mangan of Coffeyville.

In the office from Topeka were Bob Totten, representing the Kansas Contractors Association, and Wade Culwell, representing the Kansas Asphalt Association, to express the need for the highway trust fund, which pays for federal highway projects, to be fully funded in upcoming years. They also shared their views on immigration reform. Tammy Petersen and Peter Bazzel of Tonganoxie were in with the International Health Racquet and Sports Club Association to advocate for the workforce health improvement program and providing tax incentives to promote healthy lifestyles. Walter Wulf of Monarch Cement Company in Humboldt was in the office to talk about the importance of federal funding for highways, aviation, and waterways to his business.

Very truly yours,

Jerry