

2/06/2006 Moran Calls on Congress to Reconsider Administration's Budget Proposal

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Expresses Concerns with Agriculture, Veterans and Rural Health Care

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today expressed his concerns with certain aspects of the Administration's fiscal year 2007 budget proposal that was released today.

"The Administration has proposed an ambitious budget with the goal of reducing our nation's deficit by half over the next three years," Moran said. "While I applaud the President for recognizing the need to reduce spending, there are certain aspects of the proposed budget which are negligent."

Nearly \$9 billion in cuts over the next ten years are being proposed for agriculture, including changes to dairy programs, crop payments and marketing loans.

"These proposed cuts to agriculture do not come at a good time," Moran said. "Kansas farmers are currently weathering a storm of high energy prices, continued drought and low commodity prices."

For veterans, the Administration is proposing an increase in costs for veterans receiving Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care by establishing enrollment fees and increasing 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," Moran said. "With troops returning from battle and the aging veteran population, now is certainly not the time to unduly burden our nation's veterans."

Moran expressed disappointment 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," Moran said.

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.

"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," Moran said. "Our farmers, veterans, health care providers and their patients expect to be treated fairly."

Moran is a senior member of the House Committees on Agriculture and Veterans Affairs and serves on the steering committee of the Rural Health Care Coalition.

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