

March 2005 - Congratulating Pilot Steve Fossett and the Community of Salina, Kansas

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By Congressman Jerry Moran

March 9, 2005

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Steve Fossett, pilot of the Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer, and all those who assisted him during his successful world record-setting flight around the world last week.

Steve Fossett flew the first solo, non-stop, non-refueled aerial circumnavigation of the globe in a jet aircraft, completing the record-setting flight in 67 hours and one minute, with an average speed of nearly 300 miles per hour. This feat began on Monday, February 28, 2005, and ended Wednesday, March 3, 2005, at the renowned "America's Fuel Stop," the Salina Municipal Airport, Kansas, USA. With aviation pioneers like Earhart, Beech and Cessna to its credit, it is only fitting that today's modern aviation pioneer chose Kansas as the location to set his world record.

Mr. Fossett is an accomplished adventurer, having set numerous world records in aviation and sailing. In fact, Mr. Fossett owns the world record for the number of world records held, with a total of 62, to date. Collaborating with Sir Richard Branson, famed British entrepreneur and founder of the Virgin Group of companies, he embarked on this around-the-world voyage, aiming to set world records in speed around the world without stopping or refueling, distance over a close circuit without landing, and distance without landing. The Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer, the plane Mr. Fossett flew for this trek, was specially designed to be lightweight, aerodynamic, and fuel-efficient.

Mr. Fossett encountered several obstacles during his flight, including the failure of his plane's navigation system and the discovery of a fuel shortage. However, his perseverance and determination to succeed, despite the challenges, have earned him yet another notation in the record books.

I am also proud of those who assisted Mr. Fossett and the Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer, especially the talented and dedicated staff of Dr. Dennis Kuhlman, Dean of the College of Technology and Aviation at Kansas State University at Salina. K-State at Salina is one of the top aviation schools in the nation, boasting excellent facilities for student use, which also helped to attract Mr. Fossett. The efforts of K-State at Salina to train aviation mechanics and pilots are helping to ensure safe air transportation into the next generation.

In addition, I extend sincere congratulations to the Salina Airport Authority Board of Directors, Mr. Tim Rogers, Executive Director, and the many fine airport staff members. While the airport's 12,300 ft. runway was a significant factor in the site selection for this historic attempt, it didn't hurt that the Salina Airport Authority has established expertise in the areas of airfield security, ground handling, equipment and media services.

Other significant contributors to the mission were the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, led by Mr. Gerald Cook, President/CEO, and staff; and, the City of Salina, Mr. Monte Shadwick, Mayor; Mr. Dennis Kissinger, City Manager, and

staff. This was truly a collaborative effort, of magnificent proportions, befitting a record-setting feat.

I join the world in congratulating Steve Fossett and honoring the contributions of the greater Salina community on a job well done.