

5/23/2005 This Week in Congress

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May 23, 2005

Dear Friend,

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

Continuing Work to Improve Funding for Smaller Kansas Hospitals

This week I introduced legislation in the House that would improve Medicare payments to small, rural hospitals. H.R. 2350, the Rural Community Hospital Assistance Act, will improve Kansans' access to health care services by providing rural hospitals with the funding needed to keep their doors open. These small hospitals provide essential health care services, but Medicare falls woefully short in reimbursing them for the true costs of their services.

Because of their small size, rural hospitals have fewer financial reserves. They face unpredictable changes in patient volume and are more likely to be dependent on Medicare for the majority of their funding.

The Rural Community Hospital Assistance Act would allow Critical Access Hospitals, those with 25 or fewer beds, to receive reimbursements based on actual costs, rather than a percentage of the costs, for follow-up care after a patient leaves, such as skilled nursing and home health services. These hospitals would also receive payments for ambulance services based on actual costs.

While hospitals with 26 to 50 beds do not qualify as Critical Access Hospitals, they also have difficulty handling the financial losses associated with Medicare reimbursement. My legislation would also allow these hospitals to receive reimbursements based on actual costs for inpatient, outpatient, home health and ambulance services.

Medicare funding has left our health care professionals and providers struggling to meet the needs of rural Americans. The reality is that neither our seniors, nor our younger families, will be able to remain in communities that lack adequate health care services. Hospitals and other health care providers are important for our quality of life in rural Kansas, and they are essential to the survival of our communities. I will work with my colleagues in Congress to pass this important legislation.

House Reauthorized Department of Homeland Security

This week, the House of Representatives passed legislation appropriating and authorizing funding for the Department of Homeland Security for 2006. This legislation provides resources to better protect our nation against terrorism, including funding to strengthen our borders by hiring an additional 1,000 border control agents. The legislation also supports Kansas' first responders by providing grants to improve their capability to prevent and respond to terrorist acts, and it works to enhance security within our national transportation network.

In 2002, I voted against the creation of the Department of Homeland Security because I had concerns that more Washington bureaucracy was not the best solution to making our homeland more secure. While I still hold these concerns, I am pleased that the legislation passed this week will make some much-needed reforms to reduce waste and inefficiency and increase accountability at the department. Since the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, Congress has been working to reduce overlapping programs and streamline our security system, in order to ensure that resources are spent where they are needed most. There is more work to be done, and I will continue working to ensure the responsible use of taxpayer dollars for homeland security.

Hosting Kansas Legislative Wrap-Up on Smoky Hills Public Television

This week, I will host the ""Kansas Legislature 2005 Roundtable Discussion" on Smoky Hills Public Television. The show will focus on the legislative activities of the 2005 Kansas Legislature.

Participating in the program will be members of the Kansas House and Senate including:

- Senator Ralph Ostmeyer, (R-Grinnell), Senate District 40
- Representative Dennis McKinney, (D-Greensburg), House District 116
- Representative Eber Phelps (D-Hays), House District 111

The program will air on Tuesday, May 24 at 7:00 p.m. and again on Sunday, May 29 at 6:00 p.m. on Smoky Hills Public Television. Consult your local cable company or local program guide to find the public television channel in your area.

Congratulating Junction City and Fort Riley Officials on BRAC Success

On Monday, I visited Junction City to personally congratulate city and county officials on their successful work to keep Fort Riley a significant part of our country's military. On May 13, the Department of Defense released their recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission on which U.S. military bases should be closed or realigned with another base. The BRAC report held great news for Fort Riley, recommending that the division headquarters of the Army's First Infantry Division, also known as the "Big Red One," be returned to the fort from its current location in Germany. The initial stages of this transfer will bring over 2,500 jobs to the fort in the near future.

I've been impressed with the way Kansas' military communities have stepped up and worked hard to show the Department of Defense that Kansas is the best home for our troops and that our military installations are vital to our nation's defense. Junction City and all of Geary County have always worked together with Fort Riley and have been very supportive of this installation. The fort has strong community support, and in Kansas, troops can find a high quality of life for their families.

Big First Listening Tour Continues

On Saturday morning, I met with Ellis County residents in Victoria as part of my 69-county Big First Listening Tour. The tour continues over the coming months. For a full list of times and dates when I'll be in your county, visit here: <http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press>

/ks01_moran/041105TheTour.html

Congratulations Graduates

On Friday evening, I attended the eighth grade graduation for my daughter, Alex, at Felten Middle School in Hays. Sunday, I attended the high school graduation for Hays High School. Across our state, junior high school, high school and college students are completing their schooling and moving on into the future. I wish them all the best and hope that they continue to pursue educational opportunities throughout their lifetimes.

In the Office

Two award-winning Kansans were in my Washington, D.C. office this week. Barth Crouch, head of the Kansas Chapter of Pheasants Forever, was in after accepting the National Wetlands Award on Wednesday evening. Also, Elizabeth Yanik of Emporia was in with her husband, Joe, and their daughter, Mary. Mrs. Yanik was in Washington, D.C., accepting the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

In my office this week to discuss the positive effect of after-school programs were Dora Hermocills of Hugoton, Angela Henry of Iola, Dr. David Self of Hugoton, Jannette Luthi of Independence, Lula Sanchez of Dodge City, Ann and Debra Hutchinson of Chanute, and Allie and Debra Mikulka of Chanute. Also in to see the office were Marie and Andrea Luthi and Ester Knobloch, all of Madison.

In my office for a tour of the capitol building this week were Gene and Kim Wilkens of Dighton and their children, KJ, Bret and Ben. Also in were Steve and Diana Morisse of Elkhart, Bernard and Thelma Morisse of Richfield, as well as Tom and Joyce McRae of Milford. }

Very truly yours,

Jerry