

3/22/2004 This Week In Congress

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March 22, 2004

Dear Friend,

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

Kicking off the Congressional Grains Caucus

This week, Senator Pat Roberts and I announced the formation of the Congressional Grains Caucus. The Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral coalition of members who are working on behalf of grain producers and the domestic grains industry. Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and I will be the co-chairmen in the House of Representatives, while Senators Pat Roberts and Max Baucus (D-MT) will be the co-chairmen in the Senate.

Grains are an important part of our economy and diet. With the establishment of the Congressional Grains Caucus, we will work to develop a stronger voice in Congress to promote grains in the domestic and international markets. Our hope is that this effort will bring more jobs, more business and better prosperity to Kansas.

Supporting Our Troops

This week, I supported a House resolution recognizing the efforts and sacrifice of our servicemen and women who are serving in Iraq. During the past year, our troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the globe have worked diligently to protect the United States and to promote freedom. Our armed forces have performed at a level of unparalleled bravery and professionalism. They are better trained, better equipped, and better educated than any other forces in the world. I am thankful for their dedication to our country and appreciate their efforts on behalf of all Americans.

USDA Opens Comment Period for Canadian Beef Imports

Many livestock producers have expressed concerns over the proposed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rule to resume the imports of animals and animal products from countries that are considered to have a low-risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). Canada would be included in this measure. The USDA has established a comment period, which is open now through April 7, for producers to voice their concerns. This is an opportunity for those affected by the ruling to make their thoughts known to USDA.

Comments may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery or email. Send an original and three copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. 03-080-2, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, Md. 20730-1238. If you use email, send your comments to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Comments must be contained in the body of the message; do not send attached files. USDA asks that producers include their name and address in the message and use "Docket No. 03-080-2" on the subject line.

For more information, please visit their website at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/news/2004/03/commentbse_vs.html

On Monday morning, I visited the Geary County Hospital in Junction City. During the visit, I met with David Bradley, the hospital administrator, and visited with the nursing and support staff. Jolana Montgomery-Matney, executive director of foundation; Carolyn Gaston, incoming chairman of the board for foundation; and Cyndy Platt, director of medical staff development, accompanied me on the tour. With the support of the local community, Geary County Hospital continues to expand its specialty services to meet the health care needs of Junction City.

Visiting with Pennsylvania Producers

On Tuesday morning, I met with agriculture producers in Bedford, Pennsylvania at the invitation of Pennsylvania Congressman Bill Shuster. Many of the challenges that producers face in Pennsylvania are similar to what we deal with in Kansas. They are also struggling with trying to maintain their operations while dealing with an ever-changing agriculture industry. I visited with folks about dairy production, specialty crops and crop insurance. As Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, it is useful for me to learn more about agriculture in other parts of the country, in order to better serve the industry as a whole.

Receiving "Wheat Champion" Award

The National Association of Wheat Growers recently presented me with the 2003 "Wheat Champion" Award at an event in Washington, D.C. This award is presented to Members of Congress who actively support the goals and policies of the wheat industry. At the awards ceremony, I was introduced by John Thaemert of Sylvan Grove, the past-president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers and the current secretary-treasurer of the national association. Other recipients of the award include Senator Kay Bailey-Hutchinson of Texas and Congressman Earl Pomeroy of North Dakota.

Each year, more than 400 million bushels of wheat, worth \$1 billion, are produced in Kansas. This represents more than one-fifth of all wheat produced in the United States. Wheat is an important component to the Kansas economy and to our job base, and I am honored to receive the "Wheat Champion" Award.

In the Office

On Tuesday, members of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers were in the office to discuss crop insurance and ways to promote wheat, including Kendall Hodgson of Little River, Paul Penner of Hillsboro and Dean Stoskopf of Hoisington. Members of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, including Jon Starns of Brewster and Richard Jones of Salina, were in the office to discuss how conservation efforts in Kansas are being affected by the new farm bill.

Members of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership class were in to discuss issues such as the drought, crop insurance, animal identification and energy legislation. Traveling to Washington, D.C. were Rey Armendariz of Scott City, Michael Bahr of Albert, Ruth Hammer of Sublette, Gary Harshberger of Dodge City, Terry Hobbs of Penokee, Matt Johnson of Hugoton, Josh Lloyd of Clay Center, Brad Palen of Salina, Jennifer Pfortmiller of Stafford, Jason Ryan of Garden City, Derek Schrader of Alta Vista, Jess Schwieterman of Syracuse, Jeannie Traskowsky of Woodbine, John Wempe of Little River, Nancy Wilkens of Great Bend and Glennis Zimmerman of South Haven.

Doug Henkle of Garden City was in on behalf of the National Groundwater Association to discuss groundwater usage in the First District. The President-Elect of the Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association, Kim Bramhall of Vermillion, was in the office to discuss the elimination of the death tax, and the cost of health care for individuals and small business. Dirk Riniker of Wamego, President of Kansas Land Improvement Contractors Association, was also in the office.

Merlyn Spare of St. John was in the office on behalf of the Kansas Association for Career and Technical Education to discuss technical education issues. Steve Price of Leoti and Mike Turnbull of Emporia visited on behalf of the Kansas Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association to discuss funeral service issues. Matt Jackson of Junction City and other members of the Kansas State Fire Council of Firefighters were in the office to discuss the FIRE Act reauthorization and the SAFER program. These programs allow local fire departments to apply for grants to update their equipment or to hire more personnel.

On Wednesday, I met with Jolene Niernberger of Hays and Connie Stewart of Topeka on behalf of the Corporation for National and Community Service to discuss the senior companions and foster grandparents programs in their communities. On Thursday, Steve and Cynthia Haynes of Oberlin and John Montgomery of Hays were in the office on behalf of the Kansas Newspaper Association to discuss Association Health Plans, hospital privacy regulations and postal reform.

In for a tour of the Capitol this week were Dean and Cindy Walter of Liberal, Gary and Darlene Meggers of Sylvia, and their daughter Mindy, as was Mary Anne Stoskopf and her son, Wayne, of Hoisington. Bob and Donna Schmisser and their son, Joseph, of Pratt were in for a tour, as were Mark and Sherri Knight and their children, Chelsi and Luke, and Dennis and Mitzi Suhler, and their children, Adam, Amy, and Abby, and Mallory Porter all of Lyons.

Also in for a tour of the Capitol this week were students and teachers from Hays High School, including Meredith Brent, Helen Delisi, Jenny Faber, Steven Hammerschmidt, Abby Herl, Anna Herl, Ellen Herl, Emily Herl, Emily Giersch, Janet Giersch, Gary Goodchuck, Katherine Joy, Pama Joy, Jessica Juenemann, Kyle Kitson, Albert Kraus, Maggie Lanning, Jeffrey Leiker, Stacy Lovewell, Christopher Malott, Georgia Moore, Eryn Norton, Christina Quigley, Tina Quigley, Pamela Rein, Jenna Schippers, Blake Schonhaler, Mark Shaw, Tasha Staab, Stefanie Stevens, Benjamin Tilman, Sara Wasinger and Justin Weigel. The group also visited the floor of the House of Representatives.

Students and teachers from Decatur Community High School were in the office for a tour, including Allie Moore, Kelsey Dorshorst, Leah Marietta, Brett Keck, Chase Juenemann, Keely Witt, Brent Smith, Duane and Pat Dorshorst and Heidi

and John Lesinski. Also in for a tour were John and Lori Farley of Larned, and their children, Tara, Katelyn, Lacey, and their German exchange-student, Julia, and Dustin Gann of Hutchinson.

Very truly yours,

Jerry