

4/19/2004 This Week In Congress

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April 19, 2004

Dear Friend,

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

Visiting Dodge City's Medical Complex

For the past two weeks, Congress has been out of session for the spring congressional work period. This has given me additional opportunities to visit Kansas communities throughout the state. This week, I visited the Western Plains Medical Complex in Dodge City and toured their emergency room expansion project. I met with Steven Daniel, the chief executive officer for the complex, and Beverly Glass, the Business Development Director, to discuss the shortage of nurses in the area and ways that federal legislation can remedy this shortage.

Mr. Daniel shared with me his support for the Nurse Reinvestment Act, which helps nurses pay for their education by forgiving part of their student loans if they agree to practice in areas that are suffering from a nursing shortage. We also discussed legislation that Senator Sam Brownback and I recently introduced which would allow foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to practice in rural areas that have a shortage of physicians. Keeping our hospital doors open and ensuring that people have access to health care services is essential to keeping our small towns alive and viable, and I

am pleased to see the Dodge City Medical Complex expanding to meet the needs of patients.

Visiting Medical Facilities in Garden City

On Wednesday, I visited the Wound Care Center at the Garden City Medical Clinic and the Garden City Dialysis Unit. The Wound Care Center was recently named the second best wound care facility in the United States among similar facilities. During the tour of the facilities I met with the director of the Dialysis Unit, Sandy Scaia, and Mark Steadham, the president and chief executive officer of the St. Catherine's Hospital in Garden City. I visited with the doctors, nurses and other health care providers at the facilities to get a better understanding of the ways to improve the delivery of care to their patients. Many dialysis patients expressed their concerns about Medicare and Medicaid funding and the difficulty of accessing transportation to the center throughout southwest Kansas.

President Bush Holds Press Conference

On Tuesday evening, President Bush addressed the nation in a primetime news conference to discuss the war in Iraq. Fighting in recent weeks has caused serious casualties for our military forces. During the news conference, the President continued to stress his commitment to transfer sovereignty back to the Iraqi people. I support the President's timeline to turn the control of Iraq over to the Iraqis - the sooner Iraq has control of its future, the sooner there will be stability and our troops can return home.

Great Bend Child Day Care Association

On Thursday afternoon, I joined Chuck Banks, state director of Rural Development, to present a check for \$150,000 to the Great Bend Child Day Care Association. The association received a grant of \$25,600 and a loan of \$124,400 through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural and Community Development. This funding will be used to purchase their building and to make minor upgrades and modifications to the facilities. I commend the center on their commitment to children in central Kansas and hope that these funds allow them to positively affect more children's lives.

Meeting with Great Bend City Officials

On Thursday, I also met with Mike Allison, the mayor of Great Bend, and Howard Partington, the city administrator, to tour the new facilities that the city is constructing to better help the citizens of Great Bend. During the tour, I visited the Front Door Community Building - designed as a one-stop-shop for citizens new to the community or those needing government assistance. The facility will also provide an additional childcare facility and serve as a meeting space for community groups. We also looked at the proposed site for a new waterpark and at the Amber Meadows residential subdivision. The 67-acre subdivision will allow space for the construction of about 160 new homes.

Speaking at the Friends of Scouting Appreciation Breakfast

On Friday morning, I spoke at the first annual Friends of Scouting appreciation breakfast in Hays. I was honored to be included in the first annual celebration and recognition of people who support the Coronado Area Council of Boy Scouts.

I spoke about the positive influence that scouting plays in the lives of our youth.

In the Office

In for a tour of the Capitol this week were Randy Bitter and Alicia Shuff of Hutchinson and Valerie Williams of Burlington, as were Thomas and Eva Winkler and their daughter, Kirsten Lilak, of Salina. Also in for a tour were Marion and Donna Schmidt of Hays and their family.

Very truly yours,

Jerry