

## 9/12/2005 This Week in Congress

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September 12, 2005

Dear Friend,

This week Congress resumed the legislative session early to address the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The devastation of this natural disaster has been the focal point this week for Congress. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

### Congress Provides Assistance for Victims of Hurricane Katrina

Congress focused much of its time and efforts this week on responding to the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. On August 28, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast region, devastating parts of Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. Many have lost their lives, while thousands more have had their lives uprooted and homes and businesses destroyed.

This week Congress approved emergency disaster relief funds for the Gulf Coast to meet the immediate need for food, water, housing, health services, transportation and other basic necessities. The House also passed legislation to remove red tape in order to disperse aid more quickly, to reestablish the federal courts in the region and to relieve students of their financial aid obligations if they were forced to withdraw from college courses.

In addition, Congress is working to ensure that our country is better prepared for future emergencies. House leaders have called for a joint House and Senate investigative panel, and committees are beginning oversight hearings to review the preparation and relief response to Hurricane Katrina at all levels of government. A House Agriculture Committee hearing I attended this week reviewed shipping, fuel prices and disaster assistance. It is important that we learn from this event and make the necessary changes to protect American citizens in the future.

Throughout the past few days, I have been encouraged by the efforts of volunteers, military personnel and others who have come together to help the victims of this crisis. Across the state, countless Kansans have offered their time and resources to improve the lives of victims in the Gulf Coast states. It is my hope that federal disaster relief funding will provide local, state and federal authorities with the resources needed to assist victims as they begin the recovery and rebuilding process.

Awarding Alma with the Building Better Communities Award

This week I recognized the citizens of Alma with my "Building Better Communities" award for their work to revitalize the Alma Creamery. Since 1946, Alma has been identified by the presence of the Alma Creamery, but it closed in 2000. By working together, the community was able to reopen the creamery in April of 2004.

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I established the "Building Better Communities" award to showcase positive community action in Kansas, such as that in

the community of Alma. Beyond providing recognition, this program provides examples of how creative thinking and teamwork make a positive difference in rural America.

I also recognized Alma's efforts in a statement to the House of Representatives. For a full text of that speech, visit here: <http://www.house.gov/apps/list/>

[speech/ks01\\_moran/sp090605BBCAlma.html](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/ks01_moran/sp090605BBCAlma.html)

#### Controversial Eminent Domain Ruling Topic of House Agriculture Meeting

This week, the House Agriculture Committee had its first hearing on the potential effects of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on eminent domain. On June 23, the Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo vs. City of New London* to give local governments greater power to reclaim property via eminent domain. This controversial ruling addresses the definition of "public use" as stated in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. One week after the Supreme Court's decision, I supported a motion in the House of Representatives disagreeing with the Court's ruling.

Also in the hearing, we discussed H.R. 3405, the "Strengthening The Ownership of Private Property" (STOPP) Act of 2005. I am a sponsor of this legislation, which would make state and local governments unable to receive federal funding if they use eminent domain for economic development and unfairly take land from one private entity to give to another.

Private property rights are essential to the prosperity of Kansans. Citizens should not have to fear their property being taken by the government for purely economic purposes. This was recognized by our founding fathers in the Constitution, and I will work to uphold these rights.

## Joining Kansans at the Opening Weekend of the Kansas State Fair

Over the weekend, I attended events at the opening of the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson. I joined leaders in agriculture from across the state Saturday morning for the annual Farm Bureau Leadership Breakfast. While there, I discussed the resolution I introduced in March calling for immediate sanctions to be used against Japan if it fails to abide by an agreement to reopen its border to U.S. beef. I expect the House to address this issue in the near future.

Also on Saturday, WIBW Radio of Topeka hosted an agriculture forum that I participated in with Senators Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback. Questions were submitted from listeners throughout Kansas about issues surrounding agriculture and the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill.

I also shared in the celebration of the Kansas 4-H Centennial by participating in the parade and ribbon cutting ceremony Saturday morning and recognizing 4-H livestock winners at the Grand Drive and Gala that evening. This was a great opportunity to again recognize the important role 4-H plays not only in the lives of participating youth and adults, as well as the positive influence the organization has on our communities and state.

## Labor Day Weekend Activities

To begin the week, I enjoyed the Labor Day weekend by participating in the Hoisington parade and attending the Cedar Bluff Lake Association picnic and annual meeting, as well as the Natoma Heritage Seekers pancake breakfast. The Natoma Heritage Seekers are raising money to renovate a building downtown that would showcase the history and heritage of the community.

#### In the Office

In my office to discuss their efforts to help respond to Hurricane Katrina, as well as Medicaid reform and funding, were University of Kansas Hospital representatives. I met with Irene Cumming, president and CEO; Dr. Bill Barkman, chief of the medical staff; Jon Jackson, senior vice president for system integration; Kari Bruffett, government affairs liaison; and Dr. Kirk Benson, president of KU Physicians Inc.

Also in were Kansas Certified Nurse Assistants with the American Health Care Association and National Association for Geriatric Nursing Assistants to discuss Medicaid funding for long-term care. Participants from Sabetha included Karla Carter, Clarice Brooks, Terry Leutnald, Cheryl Campbell, Les Hill, Terry McGuire, Deb Hurst, Kristin Baumgartner, Lori Rieger, Sylvia Hall and Travis Hurst. In from Pittsburg were Kathy Fields, Barbara Duncan and Sandra Hubbard. Also in were Michelle Flores of Kinsley, Narissa Stevenson of Macksville, Brian Long of Leavenworth, Joyce Chamblin of Baxter Springs, Susan Roberts of Garland, and Joye Dix and Kathy Stotler of Moran.

Jim French of Partridge, James and Marie Frasure of Kansas City, Jackie Keller of Topeka, and Charlie and Kathy Melander of Assaria were in to discuss budget reconciliation, conservation programs, organic farming and food and nutrition programs.

In representing the American Cancer Society were Ronnie Strong of Arkansas City and Lisa Benlon and Jace Smith of Shawnee. We discussed funding for cancer research and President Bush's cancer fighting initiatives.

Members of the Kansas Credit Unions were in to discuss the Credit Union Regulatory Improvements Act and the Financial Accounting Standards Board merger rule. Members included Patsy Stoecker of Hutchinson, Circe Gleeson and Marilyn Wells of Wichita, Bill Henry of Topeka, Mark Keilig of Norton, and David Fulton of Moundridge.

In to discuss substance abuse, addiction and recovery were Theresa Carter, Connie Pickering and Nancy Carter of Topeka, as well as Rebecca Lowther Doan and John Doan of El Dorado.

In my office this week for tours of the Capitol building from Garden City were John and Patricia Veasant and Alan and Olga Oswalt, along with Paul and Sheryl Davis of Quinter. Sean and Brianne Newman of Overland Park were also in, as were John and Laura Zabel of Smith Center with their son, Taylor.

Very truly yours,

Jerry