

6/01/2004 This Week In Congress

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June 1, 2004

Dear Friend,

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

Remembering Sacrifice, Honoring Heroes

This Memorial Day weekend, I had the privilege to join with Kansans in honoring veterans in Washington, D.C., Greensburg and HaviLand, Kansas. We gathered together as a nation and as Kansans so that we do not forget the sacrifices made in order to preserve our freedoms. American soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen have given their lives so that we may live in a free society. They sacrificed everything to protect our way of life.

This year, especially, we remembered the veterans of World War II, as the country dedicates the National World War II

Memorial and commemorates the 60th anniversary of D-Day. On Saturday, I attended the dedication of the National World War II Memorial with veterans from around the country in Washington, D.C. The memorial has been a long time in coming, and I am glad that so many veterans, who fought to defend our country and our freedoms, were able to make the trip and see their memorial. Walking along the National Mall, it was inspiring to see thousands of veterans wearing caps with their regiments and branches of service on them, walking with their families.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of my favorite Kansans, spoke on a cold morning to thousands of soldiers before the raid on the beaches of France in 1944. He said to his troops, "The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you." Sixty years later, the eyes of our nation are once again upon our soldiers - those of the past and the present. But this time, our eyes are not filled with anticipation, but with deep appreciation. We have veterans to thank for keeping the liberties we love in tact.

On Memorial Day, I spoke at ceremonies in Haviland and Greensburg, joining with local veterans and their families to pay tribute to their service to our nation. During the events, I shared with people an e-mail that a Fort Riley soldier sent to my office. At the end of his letter he closed with this remark,

"You have not lived...

until you have almost died.

For those that have fought to protect it,

freedom has a special flavor,

the protected will never know."

Our servicemen and women protect the very freedoms that Americans hold so dear, and on Memorial Day, and every day, it is important that we thank them for their service.

Presenting a Bronze Star to Ruben Grose During World War II Reception

Before the dedication of the memorial on Saturday, the Kansas Congressional delegation held a reception for Kansas veterans and their families attending the ceremonies during the weekend. More than 250 Kansans attended the reception, bringing young and old together to celebrate the accomplishments and recognize the sacrifices of the World War II generation.

During the reception, I was honored to present a Bronze Star to World War II veteran, Ruben Grose of Sterling. Mr. Grose served as an infantryman in U.S. Army and fought in Luxembourg, France and Germany. The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to individuals who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States in a combat theater, distinguish themselves by heroism and outstanding achievement. The medal presentation was a surprise to Mr. Grose because his daughter, Nellene Kenyon of Great Bend, applied for the medal on his behalf without his knowledge.

Attending 60th Anniversary of D-Day Invasion

At the invitation of the Speaker of U.S. House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, I will attend the 60th anniversary ceremonies of the D-Day invasion during World War II on the beaches of Normandy. Also attending the ceremonies will be President Bush and World War II veterans from across the country.

On June 6, 1944, under the leadership of General Eisenhower, more than 150,000 American, British and Canadian troops stormed the northern beaches of France to push back the invading German Army. The American forces landed on Omaha and Utah beaches. The day of the invasion, forever known as D-Day, marked the beginning of Operation Overlord and the battle for Europe, which eventually forced the unconditional surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945.

As part of the activities while in Normandy, I will present a gift on behalf of Kansas and the Eisenhower Center to the American Cemetery in Normandy, where 9,386 American soldiers are buried. I will present a statue of General Eisenhower to the American Battle Monuments Commission, which operates the cemetery.

As the son of a World War II veteran, I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to join with American veterans in celebration of this historic event. Kansas is home to about 40,000 World War II veterans, and I am honored to visit Normandy to pay tribute to them and to recognize the contribution they made for me, my family and for all Americans.

Bringing Health Care Closer to Home for Kansas Veterans

I have recently sponsored legislation that would allow more veterans to receive primary health care in their local communities. Currently, veterans with a 50 percent or greater service-connected disability rating and who are more than 100 miles from a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facility, are allowed to receive care from their local doctors and hospitals. The VA will then reimburse veterans for their treatment.

H.R. 3777, the Help Establish Access to Local Timely Healthcare for Your Vets (HEALTHY Vets) Act, would extend this benefit to also allow rurally isolated veterans to contract locally for their primary health care. Bringing health care services for our veterans closer to home will cut down on the long distances veterans must travel to receive routine care. This will also help our local hospitals and health care providers because it will allow them to treat veterans who live in the area. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the VA to continue to find ways to better serve the health care needs of veterans in rural areas.

Honoring Eisenhower 60 Years Later

On Friday, I attended a luncheon and program to honor and celebrate the service and leadership of General Eisenhower. The master of ceremonies for the event was Dan Holt, the director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene. In attendance were many veterans, Kansans and international leaders. The program featured remarks from Senator Bob Dole and Susan Eisenhower, General Eisenhower's granddaughter, and others. Senator Dole spoke about the importance of leadership in our country and how, under the command of General Eisenhower, the United States was able to win World War II.

Fighting Obesity The Wrong Way

Recently, a number of studies have been released on the problem of obesity in America. As a nation, studies show that

we have become more obese, and we are seeing its health implication. Some media organizations are now suggesting that our farm policies and domestic support programs for our farmers are to blame for the increase in the waistlines of the nation.

The National Association of Wheat Growers has started an online petition for people to express their frustrations that the media is blaming our farmers and farm families for making America larger. The petition can be viewed and signed at <http://www.wheatworld.org/>

Studies show that, in the fast-paced work world, people are spending less time exercising. Research shows that the proper diet, in correlation with an exercise program, is the best way to fight off obesity and to stay fit. Pointing fingers at our farmers and farm programs is not the solution.

Interested in a Congressional Internship?

As university students begin thinking about the upcoming fall semester, I encourage those interested in learning more about our government and Congress to apply for a congressional internship in my Washington, D.C., Hays or Hutchinson offices. My own interest in public service started with a congressional internship in Washington, D.C. in 1974. It is my hope that students will be able to gain skills and learn more about our government, which they can take back and utilize in their communities.

Intern responsibilities include assisting with legislative and administrative projects. Applications are due by July 1, 2004 for fall internships, and by November 1, 2004 for spring internships. To apply for an internship, students should submit the completed application form, cover letter, résumé, college transcript and three letters of reference. The cover letter should explain their interest in the internship and the goals they hope to obtain from participation. Applications can be obtained online at: www.house.gov/moranks01/internweb.htm or by calling (202) 225-2715. In order to ensure timely receipt of the application, students are encouraged to fax their applications to (202) 225-5124. If students are unable to fax their applications, they may mail them to my district office in Hutchinson: Attn: Intern Coordinator, P.O. Box 1128, Hutchinson, KS 67504.

Visiting Stockton, Minneola and Bucklin

During the past week, Congress was out of session for the Memorial Day holiday, which allowed me the opportunity to visit several Kansas communities and talk to people about issues they are facing.

On Tuesday, I stopped in Minneola to visit the Minneola District Hospital. At the hospital, I visited with the administrator of the facility, Don Kessen, and with Debbie Johnson, the chief financial officer, in addition to several nurses, the support staff and with several patients. Mr. Kessen expressed his appreciation that Medicare reimbursements will increase this year, but was still concerned about the overall difficulty that exists in delivering quality care to rural communities. While in Minneola, I also stopped past the district nursing home and met with the members of the residents' association.

Also on Tuesday, I attended the Lions Club meeting at the United Methodist Church in Bucklin. I spoke to the group about the current status of important legislation in Congress, including the much-needed Energy bill and the Transportation bill. Many people expressed their concerns about the war in Iraq, high fuel prices and the continuing drought.

On Wednesday, I had the opportunity to stop in Stockton and visit with people in town. I talked with people at the courthouse, city hall, the post office, library, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture office. Most of the people that I visited with were concerned about the high gas prices, especially with the wheat harvest just around the corner. We also talked about funding through the Federal Aviation Administration to establish a county airport.

In the Office

World War II veterans and their families were in town for the dedication of the new National World War II Memorial this week. Many of them stopped past the office for a tour of the Capitol, including Edwin and Deana Lenkner of Coats and their son, Darrin Lenkner of Hays; Garland and Jeanne Richardson of Council Grove; Gerald and Agnes Jameson of Prairie Village; Carl and Lois Hoelscher, Don and Joy Hoelscher, Robert and Margie John, Patricia Rolf and her son, Justin, all of Bushton; Henry and Rosella Austerman of Norton; Darrell and Shirley Gottschalk of WaKeeney; and Terry and Sandra Gottschalk of Logan.

Also in for a tour of the Capitol this week were students and sponsors from the Crosswalk Christian School in Sublette, as were students and faculty from Norton Junior High. Also in for a tour were Brad Stuewe of Salina, and his son, Sam.

R.D. and Evelyne Floyd, Martie and Diane Floyd and Chris and Dara Floyd and their children, Haley and Dillon, all of Johnson, were in for a tour, as were Dave and Roetta Mann, Tara Jo and Shane Mann and Tracey and Audrey Mann, all of Quinter.

Very truly yours,

Jerry