

8/09/2004 This Week In Congress

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August 9, 2004

Dear Friend,

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

Conservation Reserve Program to Include Playa Lakes

On Wednesday, President Bush and Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announced that playa lakes will be included in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Playa lakes are small, natural bodies of water in wetland areas, that serve as a habitat for wildlife and work to recharge groundwater, such as the Ogallala Aquifer. The playa lakes region spans seven states (Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico and parts of the Texas panhandle) covering approximately 500,000 acres which provide habitat to many bird, plant and mammal species.

I would like to commend Senator Pat Roberts for his leadership in spearheading this effort in the Senate. I co-sponsored legislation (H.R. 3886) in the House that was aimed at achieving the same goal.

Visiting Goodland

On Wednesday, I had the opportunity to visit Goodland. I visited with area residents during stops at the courthouse, the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and along main street.

I also had the chance to stop at the Northwest Kansas District Fair. I spoke to fair-goers about issues affecting rural Kansas, such as the recent rains, the fall crops and the recent elections.

The Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson

On Friday, I stopped by the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center and met with director Jeff Ollenburger about the latest events and exhibits. I also met with some of the volunteers who are working hard to ensure that this important place continues to be the leading space museum in the country. We are truly blessed to have such an incredible place here in Kansas.

Currently, the Cosmosphere has a number of ongoing programs designed to spark children's interest in space and show them what it takes to become an astronaut. Programs at the Cosmosphere are constantly changing, and I would encourage you to take advantage of all they have to offer.

Discussing Long-Term Care in Ellsworth

On Thursday, I was able to stop by and see Jim Morford, Administrator for the Good Samaritan Retirement Village in Ellsworth and tour their facility. The retirement village has undergone a recent and extensive expansion and is proving to be one of the most innovative facilities of its kind in Kansas. The facility is owned by the non-profit Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society and features 60 skilled nursing beds and 46 intermediate nursing beds.

Long-term care is very import to me and to the First District. Currently, the First District receives the highest number of Social Security beneficiaries, at over 132,000, than any other Kansas district. In addition, the 2000 Census estimates that there are over 109,000 Kansans who are over the age of 65, making health care a very important issue and one of my top priorities.

Facilities like the Good Samaritan Retirement Village provide an important role in helping seniors maintain their independence in a clean, safe environment that offers trained on-call staff should they need it.

Congress Extends Tax Break for Small Businesses

Before Congress adjourned for the August district work period, the House was successful in passing legislation that is crucial in helping small businesses. Currently, small business owners are allowed to claim up to a \$100,000 deduction for equipment purchases and other capital investments. However, this was scheduled to sunset to the original level of \$25,000 at the end of 2005. The legislation, which passed the House by a vote of 424-0, now guarantees that small businesses will be able to benefit from this deduction through 2007 at the full amount.

Highlighting the Importance of Kansas Cotton

On Tuesday, I will be participating in a tour designed to highlight the growing importance of cotton within Kansas. I will spend the day in Moscow, which is responsible for producing over half of the \$30 million Kansas cotton crop each year. I will have an opportunity to meet with local producers, tour their fields and local cotton gin and finish the day with a panel discussion.

Crops like cotton are growing in importance to the state because they have numerous benefits. Some of these benefits include up to one-third less water usage and fewer chemicals. Look for next week's issue, where I will have more on the tour.

In the Office

This week several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C. office for a tour of the Capitol. Among these Kansans were Ben Marshall of Sterling and Doug and Renee Oliphant and their children Scott, Travis and Nicole of Salina. Also in the office were Stephen and Carol Cordel and their sons Nathaniel and Zachary of Cawker City and Roland Koops of Cawker City.

Mary Hatesohl and her children Mike, Andy and Tommy of Clay Center were in the office as were Greg and Suzan Moyer and their son Josh of McDonald. Russ and Irene Grant and their children Tiffany and Matthew of Wichita were in the office for a tour as well.

Very truly yours,

Jerry