

12/20/2004 This Week In Congress

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December 20, 2004

Dear Friend,

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

Celebrating the Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time for reflection and for spending time with friends and family. This year we have much to be thankful for as Americans and as Kansans. However, as we gather with family around our dinner tables, join friends in our houses of worship and ponder the start of a new year, it is important that we remember those who are defending our country half a world away.

Please join my family and me this holiday season in thanking our veterans for their sacrifice. Say a prayer for the safe return of those brave men and women who cannot be with their families this year because they are defending our freedom. Let us also not forget those who are less fortunate during this time of giving. Last week I joined the Salvation Army for their annual bell ringing campaign. The proceeds from this annual fundraising drive go to help those less fortunate within our communities.

On behalf of my family, I hope you have a Merry Christmas and that your holidays are safe and full of joy.

Studying Specialty Crops in California

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, my committee is responsible for addressing risk management issues for all crops. This week, I had the opportunity to spend time with producers in California for a day and a half, to learn more about the specialty crop industry. On Monday, I traveled to Peter Rabbit Farms, Prime Time International, Capurro Marketing and Richard Bagdasarian, Inc., where I observed the packing and cooling of carrots, peppers and various leaf vegetables. On Tuesday, I joined Sunkist Growers, Inc., to observe their citrus operation, and Ready PAC Produce, which handles fresh-cut produce. I now have a better understanding of how our crop insurance program is working for non-program crop producers.

Learning More About Sunflowers and Weather in Goodland

On Tuesday, I traveled to Goodland for a tour of Sigco Sun Products sunflower processing plant, as well as the National Weather Service. While at Sigco, I joined Michael Bretz, Crop Production Manager, for the tour and explanation of the sunflower processing operation. At the National Weather Service, I met with Meteorologist In Charge, Scott Mentzer. In a state like ours, with constantly changing weather, the work of these folks helps to save lives. We are fortunate to have them as a resource that Kansas and our surrounding region can count on for accurate and timely weather reports.

Ethanol Plant Now Operating in Gove County

On Wednesday, I joined Michael Erhart, CEO and General Manager of Western Plains Energy for a tour of the state's newest ethanol plant in Gove County. Western Plains Energy consumes approximately 30,000 bushels of corn a day and employs over 30 people. While at Western Plains Energy, I observed the ethanol production line and met with employees of the facility.

This was an excellent opportunity to see how this renewable fuel is combining the agriculture and energy communities into a leading industry in Kansas. Currently, Kansas has six dry-mill ethanol plants in operation, producing 130 million gallons annually. Plans are under way to break ground on a seventh plant, in Garnett, that will increase production capacity up to 35 million gallons, for a total output in Kansas of 165 million gallons by 2005.

Speaking with Kansans on Public Access Television

On Thursday night, I appeared on Smoky Hills Public Television (SHPTV) for another live installment of SHPTV's "Mid-America Life: A Conversation with Jerry Moran" series. This program allowed me to provide a post-Congressional session summary and was carried on public access stations across the state.

The format of the show allows me to discuss Congressional activities and then field calls from Kansans. The topics raised in this program ranged from agriculture to the war in Iraq. The diversity of these issues reflect the many challenges that remain ahead of us, as a country, and as Congress reconvenes next month. I will continue to work on your behalf to

ensure that the voices of all Kansans are heard as these complex issues are handled.

Very truly yours,

Jerry