

8/28/2006 This Week in Congress

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August 28, 2006

Dear Friend,

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

Rural Development Tour Focuses on Job Creation and Community Needs

I hosted the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Under Secretary for Rural Development, Thomas C. Dorr, in Kansas on Wednesday and Thursday to visit USDA Rural Development projects throughout the state. We were joined by Chuck Banks, Kansas State Director of USDA Rural Development, in making stops at Sunflower Electric Power Corporation in Holcomb, the Ellsworth Rural Health Clinic and Gene's Heartland Grocery Store in Ellsworth, the Self-Help Housing Program and Bartell House in Junction City, and USDA's Rural Development office at Fort Riley.

As Under Secretary, Dorr oversees USDA Rural Development policies and programs for businesses, utilities and housing. Combined, the three program areas provide \$14 billion in annual funding for loans, grants and technical assistance to rural residents, communities and businesses. The programs also maintain an \$87 billion portfolio of existing business, housing and infrastructure loans to rural America.

The First District is one of the most rural districts in the country, and it was important to have Under Secretary Dorr spend time viewing the success of Kansans in utilizing the programs his department administers. Our discussions focused on rural and community development, as well as the great potential bio-energy projects have in adding economic value to Kansas. I appreciate his active role and genuine interest in making sure these programs are able to benefit those living in our state.

During the tour, Mr. Dorr, Mr. Banks and I had the opportunity to meet with members of Kansas Farm Bureau, including Board of Directors Vice President Edie Dahlsten and husband, Larry; Terry Holdren, Associate State Director of Governmental Relations; and Harry Watts, Managing Director of Governmental Relations. My thanks and appreciation go to the many people that planned and participated in making this a very educational and successful visit, including Bob Krause and Sue Peterson with Kansas State University, Clay Blair with the Kansas Bioscience Authority, and Kent Glasscock and Trevor McKeeman with the National Institute for Strategic Technology Acquisition and Commercialization (NISTAC). [Click here to view photos from the tour.](#)

Hosting House Intelligence Committee Chairman in Kansas

On Tuesday, I was joined by the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Congressman Peter Hoekstra, in Junction City and Kansas City. Chairman Hoekstra updated Kansans on the latest terror plot, the situation in the Middle East and Iraq, and efforts here at home to protect against terrorism. Congressman Hoekstra is a leader in the House of Representatives and the Global War on Terror and I was pleased to have him join me in Kansas.

Additional Assistance Announced to Aid Kansas Producers Suffering from Drought

Late Friday, USDA announced further steps to assist producers suffering from drought in Kansas. In counties where Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land has been approved for emergency haying and grazing, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director may extend the ending date to September 30 in certain circumstances. USDA also announced that Sheridan County has been approved for emergency haying and grazing of CRP acres.

Every little bit helps. It has been a long process to reach this point, but the announcement of Sheridan County and the ability to extend the end date for emergency haying and grazing will further help Kansas farmers and ranchers. For more information, producers should contact their local FSA office.

Addressing Prices at the Pump and National Security

In a Tuesday press conference at the Kansas Association of Ethanol Processors in Topeka, I encouraged policymakers to give their full support to the 25x'25 Energy Plan. This initiative calls for 25 percent of the nation's energy needs to be met by renewable resources, such as wind, solar, biogas and biomass, including corn, soybeans and wheat straw, by the year 2025.

I am an original sponsor of a bipartisan resolution pending in the U.S. House and Senate that calls on the nation to meet the 25x'25 goal. It is not an easy goal to attain, but it is possible if we take the necessary steps. Our country is ready to invoke a new energy policy that stabilizes costs and assures national security. This means great things for Kansas, as we have a lot to offer in the development of renewable energy, from wind and solar power to a variety of biofuels. Greater access to ethanol and other biofuels also creates more jobs in small communities and additional income for farmers.

Joining me at the press conference were State Sen. Mark Taddiken, Chairman of the State Senate Agriculture Committee and the Kansas 25x'25 Alliance, as well as a group of state and local agriculture and energy leaders, including Adrian Polansky, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture; State Rep. Sharon Schwartz; Dr. Fred Cholick, Kansas State College of Agriculture Dean; Tom Tunnell, Kansas Association of Ethanol Processors President; Duane Simpson, Kansas Grain and Feed Association Vice President of Government Affairs; Kenlon Johannes, Kansas Soybean Association CEO; Brad Harrelson, Kansas Farm Bureau State Policy Director; Sue Schulte, Kansas Corn Growers & Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Director of Communications; and Greg Krissek, ICM Director of Governmental Affairs. Photos from the press event are available in my photo album.

Honoring Bill Stahl of Junction City

I had the honor of presenting the Prisoner of War Medal to Bill Stahl of Junction City on Tuesday. Mr. Stahl was captured in late 1944 during World War II by German soldiers. He labored at a prison camp near Musburg, Germany, until the end of the war before being picked up by Allied Forces. In May 1945, Mr. Stahl returned to the United States for a surprise reunion with friends and family. Almost 62 years later, he received his medal surrounded by a crowd of friends and family.

I would like to thank the Stahl family for this opportunity, as well as Fred Meyers and American Legion Post #45 for hosting the event. This event reminded me that in a time when our young people idolize celebrities and athletes, we should never forget the real heroes in this country - our servicemen and women and our veterans. Mr. Stahl served his country, received an education, raised a family and volunteered his time and talents to his community. He has set an example for us all to follow in life. For photos from the event, [click here](#).

Receiving the "Spirit of Enterprise" Award

This week in Topeka, the Kansas Chamber of Commerce presented me with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "Spirit of Enterprise Award." The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation, representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector and region. This award is given to Members of Congress who support legislation that creates jobs, increases productivity and strengthens the economy. The award was presented by David Kerr, Topeka Chamber of Commerce Chairman and President of AT&T Kansas. I am honored to receive this award and also appreciate Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) and Andrew Jetter, FHLB President and CEO, for hosting the event.

Discussing Health Care at Hays Medical Center and Speaking to Leadership Kansas

On Friday, I joined Dr. John Jeter at the Hays Medical Center to visit about activities at the medical center and discuss Medicare reimbursement. While there, I toured the cardiac center and ICU unit and visited with physicians, medical staff and patients. I stayed at the Medical Center afterward to speak to the Leadership Kansas group about its programs. Leadership Kansas Class of 2006 participants from the First District include Brittany Howell of LaCrosse, Jay Kennedy of Frankfort, Travis Kohlrus of Ellis, Janice McCart of Colby, Amber Schwanke and Kammi Schwarting of Garden City, Dennis Stoecklein of Hutchinson, Ronald Walker of Junction City, James Wright of Great Bend and Larry Berg of Hays, 2006 Leadership Kansas Chair.

Visiting Herington

I spent time in Herington this week visiting with residents of this Dickinson County community. While in town, I made stops at the City Hall, the USD 487 office, the Herington Times, Kay's Pharmacy, Herington Municipal Hospital, Boelling Pharmacy and KanEquip, Inc. I appreciate the opportunity to learn from the citizens of this community.

Kansans in my office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building included Jack Willenberg of Claflin and David Riddel and Seth Mecum of Wichita. Shevawn Shields of Humboldt also came by for a tour with her children, Hunter and Bryce Isaac, and her parents, Galen and Marcella Mears, of El Dorado.

Very truly yours,

Jerry