

11/27/2006 This Week in Congress

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November 27, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving holiday. We are especially grateful to our soldiers who are away from their families this holiday season. A special appreciation goes to the Kansas National Guard's 731st Transportation Company, headquartered in Larned, who will soon deploy to Iraq. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with all who serve. Congress will reconvene on December 5. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Attending the Annual Conference of the Kansas Association of Counties

This week in Topeka, I attended the annual conference of the Kansas Association of Counties. It was a good opportunity to visit with county commissioners and other local officials from across Kansas on issues including sales taxes, homeland security funding, Medicaid, and the ability to issue driver's licenses at the county level.

During the conference, Kansas Collaborative received the Midwestern Region Innovations Award from the Council of State Governments for its work to lower prescription drug costs for jails and health care programs in all 105 Kansas

counties. Organized by the state of Kansas, the Kansas Association of Counties and the League of Kansas Municipalities, this initiative saved Kansas taxpayers \$7 million. Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, manager of Kansas Collaborative, accepted the award presented by Lieutenant Governor-elect Mark Parkinson. This is a great example of government officials coming together and finding ways to cut expenses locally to save taxpayers money. This program will serve as a model to other states looking to cut costs for state and local governments.

New Veterans' Outpatient Clinic Opens in Junction City

I visited Junction City on Tuesday and joined veterans and representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to officially open a new community based outpatient clinic (CBOC). This clinic will provide routine health care, laboratory work, radiological views, prescription services and mental health services. This is the fifth CBOC open Monday through Friday in our district. Other locations include Liberal, Dodge City, Hays and Salina. These clinics bring VA health care services closer to veterans, which helps ensure reasonable and timely access to care.

I would like to thank the VA's Health Network Director, Dr. Peter Almenoff, and his staff for making this service available for veterans in Kansas. I would also like to thank members from the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans and other veteran service organizations for their continued advocacy.

Visiting Kansas Communities

Hutchinson: On Monday, I was pleased to join the Hutchinson Rotary Club for their regular meeting. It was great to visit with many friends. I appreciate the fellowship and commitment to community that Rotary instills. Mark Turgeon, Wichita State University's Head Basketball Coach, was the speaker.

Emporia: I spent time in Emporia this week stopping at local businesses and visiting with area residents. I made stops at United Way, the office of attorneys Miller and Larson, Jim Pickert Real Estate, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Regional Development Association, Emporia Gazette, USD 253 office, City Hall, Edward Jones Investments, and the office of Internal Medicine Associates.

Junction City: After attending the CBOC opening, I attended and spoke at the Junction City Rotary Club's weekly meeting. I appreciate the hospitality extended to me and the opportunity to listen to a variety of concerns ranging from No Child Left Behind, the war in Iraq, proposed Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service office closures, and general concerns about the direction our country is heading. Thank you to Carolyn Gaston for inviting me on behalf of Rotary.

Plainville: On Tuesday, I attended a dinner at the United Methodist Church in Plainville. This is the church I grew up in. Phelma Knight hosts this annual dinner for members of the church. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit with several area residents during the dinner.

In the Office

Tyson Kumorowski of Hutchinson, who is currently interning in Washington, D.C., stopped by the office this week to visit. In for tours of the United States Capitol were Darren and Lori Bartels of Great Bend with their four daughters, Megan, Alexa, Christine and Jessica.

Very truly yours,

Jerry