

## 4/30/2007 This Week in Congress

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April 30, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." The House passed legislation this week that would create new Small Business Administration loan programs aimed at providing loans for start-up businesses. The House also passed a bill that would provide scholarships for math and science majors who agree to teach in schools that demonstrate a significant need for teachers in these subjects, as well as legislation authorizing federal grants for scientists and engineers at universities. Both the House and Senate also passed the Iraq war supplemental bill. It is on its way to the White House where President Bush is expected to veto it.

The U.S. Congress and State of California lost one of its representatives this week. Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald passed away after battling cancer. My thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends as they lay her to rest today in Los Angeles.

Join Me Today in Russell, Saline, McPherson and Dickinson Counties

I am traveling to Russell, Saline, McPherson and Dickinson Counties today to examine freeze damaged wheat fields and get a closer look at fields that suffered damage from the hard freeze earlier this month. Representatives of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials and Kansas State University scientists will accompany me on the tour.

Multiple years of drought conditions coupled with this year's winter storm and April freeze have taken its toll on Kansas agriculture. It is disappointing that after back-to-back drought years, what was shaping up to be a good wheat crop was severely damaged by the spring freeze in some parts of the state. I want to see the severity of this damage first hand to convey the urgency of passing agriculture disaster assistance legislation to my colleagues in Congress. I invite all area producers and interested Kansans to attend stops on the tour. [Click here to view the tour schedule.](#)

#### Community Efforts Convince Farm Service Agency to Change Plan

The efforts of community members in counties with Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices slated to be closed paid off this week as FSA announced modifications to its office restructuring plan. The proposal originally called for 11 county offices to be shut down across the state. Changes made in the final plan will allow offices in Barber, Gove and Morton counties to remain open.

Credit should be given to the community members in the affected counties who came forward with their concerns and shared ideas to improve the original restructuring plan. Much of the change in the final FSA plan can be attributed to their efforts and I applaud these communities for bringing about substantive changes to the initial FSA proposal.

While I appreciate that FSA listened to the voices of local residents and modified its final plan to better reflect the needs

of Kansas farmers and ranchers, I remain opposed to the closing of any local FSA office in Kansas. I will continue working with Kansans to convince USDA officials in Washington, D.C. to pursue additional changes to the restructuring plan.

[Click here to listen to additional comments I made on this topic.](#)

### Hearing from General Petraeus on Iraq

On Wednesday, I was briefed by General David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq. General Petraeus took command of U.S. forces two months ago and has overseen the recent buildup in troops. He talked about the situation in Iraq and noted improvements in securing difficult parts of the country, but also shared that many significant challenges remain in achieving political reconciliation among Iraq's leaders and preventing interference by neighboring countries.

### Learning about the Administration's Proposal on Essential Air Service

I participated in a Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation hearing on Essential Air Service (EAS) this week. EAS guarantees small communities across the country have access to commercial flights. In Kansas, airports in Dodge City, Great Bend, Hays, Liberal, Manhattan and Salina are served by commercial airlines because of EAS.

At the hearing, Dr. Gerald Dillingham with the U.S. Government Accountability Office and Michael W. Reynolds, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, presented the Administration's plan for the upcoming reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration. Their proposal would significantly cut and limit the EAS program. I oppose this plan and will work in the upcoming bill to make sure commercial aviation is viable for rural America.

#### Testifying Before the Veterans' Affairs Committee on Rural Access to Care Bill

This week, I testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (VA) Subcommittee on Health about legislation I introduced to give veterans living in rural areas more health care options when VA care is not available. My legislation, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act, would allow our most underserved veterans - those who live the farthest away from VA health facilities - the choice to receive care closer to home at a local hospital or physician's office. The hearing was a good opportunity to call attention to the great difficulty some rural veterans in Kansas experience in accessing distant VA facilities and I am hopeful the Committee will work toward addressing this problem.

#### Presenting Rural Development Grant to Ellsworth County Medical Center

I joined U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks on Friday to present Ellsworth County Medical Center (ECMC) with a check for improvements to the hospital's telemedicine system. The funding will be used to install special videoconferencing equipment and establish a network that connects physician specialists at Salina or Wichita with ECMC for early diagnosis of trauma patients.

Funding for the project, which was provided through the USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program, will benefit nearly 40,000 rural Kansans in Ellsworth, Barton, Russell and Lincoln counties. USDA Rural Development offers

many valuable programs that help communities and rural businesses overcome some of the challenges faced in rural Kansas. Congratulations to ECMC Community Relations Director Doug Stefek and the medical center employees for successfully moving this project forward.

After the presentation, I toured the facility with ECMC Hospital Administrator Roger Pearson. Thanks to Mr. Pearson for taking the time to show me around.

### Speaking Out Against Genocide in Darfur

This week, I spoke to the U.S. House of Representatives in support of a resolution calling on the League of Arab States to acknowledge the genocide taking place in Darfur, Sudan. I had the opportunity earlier this month to travel to Sudan to see firsthand the results of a government that allows violence, hunger, disease and dislocation to be used as a weapon against its own people. The House overwhelmingly approved this resolution and I am hopeful it will put increased pressure on countries in the region to end the violence and bring peace and stability to Darfur.

[Click here to read an editorial I wrote on this topic.](#)

### Kansans Gather in Washington to Honor Coach Bill Snyder

I joined fellow Kansans living and working in our nation's capital Wednesday to honor former Kansas State University football Coach Bill Snyder at the annual Kansas Society of Washington, D.C. Cherry Blossom Banquet. Coach Snyder was recognized as the 2007 Kansan of the Year for his impressive winning career at K-State and for his contributions to the Manhattan community and the rest of our state. Congratulations to Coach Snyder and his wife, Sharon.

### Celebrating the Marriage of Mitchell Hall and Tavish Marshall

This weekend, I attended the wedding of one of my district staff representatives, Mitchell Hall, who works in my Hays District Office. Mitchell and Tavish Marshall were married in Tipton. I am excited for Mitchell and Tavish and enjoyed the opportunity to join them in celebrating their special day.

### In the Office

Dora Hermocillo, LaDonna Hall, Phyllis Beadles, Heather Haller, Patricia Reyes, Macayla Rome and Kacia Hall of Hugoton were in with Afterschool Alliance to tell me about how young children in Hugoton are benefiting from tutoring and other afterschool programs. A group of Wichita area aviation industry representatives were in to talk about the importance of Boeing's proposal to build an aerial-refueling plane to replace the Air Forces' aging tanker fleet. In with the group were John Frederick of Boeing, Don McGinty of the McGinty Machine Company, Kenneth Hiten of D-J Engineering, Debbie Gann of Spirit AeroSystems, and Ron Pittman.

Bob Fee of Hutchinson, Greg Renn of Wellington and Gene Brake of Olathe were in with the Kansas Association of Insurance Agents to express their opposition to legislation that would repeal the McCarran-Ferguson Act. John Federico of Topeka was in with the Kansas Cable Telecommunication Association to discuss legislation related to the

telecommunications industry. Andy Allison of Topeka was in with the Kansas Health Policy Authority to talk about the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) reauthorization. Judy Bellome of Lawrence was in to advocate for more Medicare resources to be used for seniors that need home health and hospice care.

Kansas State University Joint Council of Extension Professionals were in to tell me about extension programs across the state and ask for continued support of extension programs in Kansas. In with the group were Andrea Burns of Dodge City, Melinda Daily of Sharon Springs, Rodney George of Minneapolis, Donita Sparks of Oakley, J. Pat Murphy of Manhattan and Chuck Otte of Junction City. Several Kansans were in with the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists to discuss educational funding for Advanced Practice Nurses, Medicare reimbursement cuts and anesthesia payment and teaching rules. In with the group were Katharine Clark, Marcela Warren and Jessica Burceu of Wichita; Kyle Nevills of Garden City; Joe Conroy of Emporia; Sharon Niemann of Goddard; Ruth Morris of Overland Park; and Vance Crain of Leawood.

K-State students Theresa Doyle of Overland Park and Liz Vargas of Dodge City were in with K-State Human Ecology Professor Carol Kellett to tell me about research they conducted on the impact of military deployments on relationship satisfaction. The students and Professor Kellett presented their research this week in Washington, D.C. Sister Therese Bangert of Kansas City and Sister Janet Cashman of Leavenworth were in with the Kansas Catholic Conference to talk about immigration reform. Benjamin Rebein of Dodge City was in representing the American Osteopathic Association to discuss the challenges of getting osteopathic physicians in rural areas. Ben is a first year medical student at the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences.

Kevin Walker of Olathe, Megan Barry of Overland Park, Linda De Coursey and Carol Wheeler of Topeka, Walter O'Hara of Wichita and Kevin Harker of Leawood were in with the Kansas Chapter of the American Heart Association to advocate for legislation that focuses on heart disease in women. Charlotte Buchanan and Diane Greenleaf of Wichita were in representing the Kansas Dietetic Association to tell me about the importance of nutrition education programs. Dr. Laurie White of Dodge City, Dr. Jeanette Holland of Oskaloosa, Dr. Mike Hattan of Hays, Dr. Mike Malone of Topeka, and Gary Robbins were in with the Kansas Optometric Association to discuss a number of issues important to eye and vision care.

Margo Shepler and Peggy Johnson of Wichita and Terry Burnett of Derby were in with Susan G. Komen for the Cure to talk about the importance of early detection programs and cancer research. Members of the Community Bankers Association of Kansas were in to inform me of legislation important to community banks in our state. In with the group were Gregg and Janet Lewis of Osawatomie; Dale, Susanne and Jashel Bradley of Miltonvale; Dan and Pat Coup of Hope; Steve and Sandy Handke of Everset; Mike and Maggie Johnson of Courtland; Joe Kennedy of Frankfort; Richard Ciemny

and Frank, Laura and Kathy Suellentrop of Wichita; Paul and Marilyn Boeding of Seneca; and Bruce Morgan of Roeland Park.

Joy Haverfield of Topeka, who has one son serving in the U.S. Navy and another in the Kansas Air National Guard, came by to visit about military healthcare, benefits, training and other issues important to her family. Andy Haney of Ottawa and Neil Dobler of Topeka were in with the American Public Works Association's National Government Affairs Committee to discuss the next highway bill reauthorization. Bill May, Jack Guze, Ted Passig, John Smith, Paul Fenaroli and Curtis Sneden of Topeka were in representing Payless ShoeSource to talk about trade and tariff policy. Chuck Stones of Topeka and Mike Stevens of Sublette were in with the Kansas Bankers Association to discuss banking issues within this year's reauthorization of the farm bill.

Bob Bush of Hutchinson, Kelly Frakes of Salina, Neal Whitaker of Topeka, Casey Mussatto of Osage City, Bill Goodlatte of Wichita, Terry Dow of Manhattan and Drew Demo of Independence were in with the Kansas Beer Wholesalers Association to talk about programs designed to prevent underage drinking. Don Hineman of Dighton, Derek Zongker of Sylvia, Dr. David Hansen of Wichita and Jim French of Partridge were in with OxFam America to share their ideas for the next farm bill. Thomas Palace and Marvin Spees of Topeka and Dave Lybarger of Garnett were in with the Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association of Kansas to talk about accessing Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) fund money for environmental remediation.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C. office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Ray and Sharon Darling and Ralph and Mary Bauman of Abilene. Also in for a tour were Richard and Darlene Brubaker of Bird City, with their daughters, Darla Deeds, Kayla Ochsner and Paula Groff. In from Hays were Randall and Mary Braden, Nick and Pauletta Niernberger, Bob and Sondra Swift, Deb Denning, Greg Kerr and Eric Zimmerman. Brenda Scruggs of Overland Park also stopped by for a tour.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

