

6/01/2007 Thanking Kansas Bureau of Investigation Director Larry Welch

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Kansas was once known for being part of the Wild West. Widespread lawlessness allowed for cattle rustlers and wild cowboys in towns like Abilene and Dodge City. Our great state also has a history of lawmen known for settling issues with a personalized style of law enforcement. Sheriffs Wyatt Earp and Wild Bill Hickok faced threats from individuals bent on destroying a peaceful way of life. The retiring Director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation is part of this storied tradition of making Kansas a state where families can pursue a way of life envied by others. Today, Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Larry Welch's service as a leader and innovator in law enforcement.

Director Welch and I share a similar academic background. We both received a bachelor's degree and a law degree from the University of Kansas. Director Welch though, went on to serve his country in a noble profession. Where did I go wrong, becoming a lawyer then a banker and then a politician? In 1961, he was appointed as a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For 25 years, his tireless commitment to justice led him around the country. Before returning to Kansas, he served in FBI assignments in Knoxville, Tennessee; Washington, D.C.; Miami, Florida; West Palm Beach, Florida; San Juan, Puerto Rico; San Antonio, Texas; and McAllen, Texas.

During his lengthy service with the FBI, Director Welch was charged with supervising all FBI operations in Kansas. After his time with the FBI, he began work as associate director at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center. While at the training center he was promoted to Director and provided leadership in this position for nearly five years before he accepted the appointment by Attorney General Robert Stephan as director of the KBI. He was reappointed KBI director by Attorney General Carla Stovall in 1995 and by Attorney General Phill Kline in 2003.

Director Welch has been a strong advocate in the fight against methamphetamine and its devastating impact on communities across Kansas. He recognized the significant harm and damage this poison inflicts on families and has made combating the manufacture and use of meth a priority of the KBI under his administration. Seizures of meth labs have drastically decreased in our state during the past several years. This can only be attributed to the effectiveness of

law enforcement in Kansas making the production of meth an extremely risky business. The humble and relentless man that Director Welch is, could be seen when he quickly responded to compliments of the KBI's many lab seizures by explaining that meth is still coming in from foreign sources and that there was still much work to be done to protect Kansans from this destructive drug.

I would be remiss if I did not include in a tribute to this man, any mention of the care he has shown to the law enforcement community in Kansas. His compassion is well known throughout the state. He is consistently the first to express sympathies, in person, to families who have lost a loved one in the line of duty. Many in this field of work, whether in the city police, sheriff's department, or Highway Patrol, consider Larry Welch a friend and an advisor.

Director Welch has given back to his state and country for 46 years with much of his career dedicated to making Kansas a safe and desirable place to live and visit. In the many important roles he filled in his life, he served out of a sense of duty. I join Larry Welch's many friends and admirers in thanking a great man for great service.