

## 5/11/2007 The Eternity of Two Minutes

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By Congressman Jerry Moran

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Twenty minutes can go by in a flash while two minutes can seem like an eternity. Last Friday night, Greensburg, Kansas, was struck by the most destructive tornado in the United States in more than eight years. With 20 minutes warning of the approaching storm, the people of Greensburg did everything possible to gather their loved ones, to protect their homes and to seek shelter. Twenty minutes is an awfully short amount of time to try to save your life. Over the next two minutes, the mile and a half wide tornado and winds blowing at an estimated 207 miles an hour leveled this community.

I walked through Greensburg on Saturday and found only one home that I thought would be habitable. All the other homes are gone, reduced to piles of rubble. The downtown business district is gone. City Hall is gone. The high school is gone. The grade school is gone. The hospital is gone. The library is gone. Also gone is nine lives taken from us too soon.

The losses from the tornado in Greensburg are significant. But so too are the heroic efforts. Since the morning after the tornado, I have seen the people of Greensburg rise up to face this tragedy head on. Their lives have been devoted toward making certain that neighbors are okay, seeking recovery of their loved ones and their property and trying to make certain that everyone is found and that life is preserved.

In Kansas, we help our neighbors. The nearby community of HaviLand has been providing shelter to the families made homeless by the tornado. At the grocery store, I watched as customers placed groceries on the counter. The grocery store owner asked, "Where are you from?" When the answer was Greensburg, the shopkeeper responded, "No charge."

I spent some time with the national media who are covering this story and my guess is that Greensburg is a little like a foreign country to many of them. They often questioned me, looking across the debris and rubble, "Congressman, do you really believe this community has a future, will this town be rebuilt?" Because of the spirit of the people in Greensburg, the answer is emphatically yes. One reporter documented the day after the tornado that the people of Greensburg were most upset not about the damage, but that they could not get back into town fast enough to start rebuilding.

The people of Kansas and of Greensburg will make every effort to see that their community continues on and that their children and grandchildren can have a future there. So, as the folks of Greensburg try to pick up their lives, rebuild their homes, re-establish businesses and recreate a community, they will make Greensburg home again. This small Kansas town has a future not just because the people are there to rebuild, but because the people of our state and our country will pitch in and help give Greensburg residents what they so desperately need - a place to call home.