

## 8/13/2007 This Week in Congress

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August 13, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Congress is out of session for the next three weeks for the August District work period. This is an important time that allows Members of Congress to spend time in their districts, meeting with the people they represent. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Remembering Sergeant First Class Travis Bachman of Garden City

On Saturday, I joined the family and friends of Sergeant First Class Travis S. Bachman for funeral services at First Southern Baptist Church in Garden City. Travis, 30, died on August 1 in Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was a member of the 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery of the Kansas National Guard.

Members of the Patriot Guard traveled from across the state to pay tribute to Travis and show their support for the family. Travis stepped forward to protect our country and his bravery and sacrifice must not be forgotten. We are indebted to our military men and women for the tremendous sacrifice they make on our behalf. My thoughts and prayers are with the Bachman family during this difficult time.

## Meeting with Hutchinson Residents

Hutchinson Rotary Club: On Monday, I spoke to the Hutchinson Rotary Club at the Grand Prairie Convention Center. Thank you to club president Joe Ontjes for hosting me and to Lynnette Hilty for her kind introduction. I enjoyed visiting with the group about health care, immigration, agriculture and education issues, including two important pieces of legislation - the 2007 Farm Bill and No Child Left Behind.

PrairieStar Health Center: I also participated in an open house for PrairieStar Health Center, which recently relocated to the Trade Center at 1600 North Lorraine. I worked in cooperation with health center officials to help PrairieStar receive the designation as a federally qualified health center. This designation brings with it more than \$500,000 in annual assistance that will allow PrairieStar to reach more uninsured and underinsured citizens. I appreciate the continued dedication of Sally Tesluk, PrairieStar CEO, and her staff. A special thank you goes to Gene Schmidt, who retired at the end of last week as the CEO of Hutchinson Hospital. An important part of Gene's impressive legacy will be his long-standing support of PrairieStar. More than 10 years ago, Gene saw how a community health center could provide needed services and lower the overall cost of health care by reducing the number of emergency room visits. I appreciate Gene's friendship and will miss his advice and counsel, but wish him well in his much-deserved retirement.

Area Farmers and Rural Development Officials: While in town, I also visited with a group of farmers and rural development officials about ongoing consideration of the 2007 Farm Bill. Even though the legislation has passed the House of Representatives, there is still a long way to go before a new farm bill is signed into law. Thank you to Jim French, Reno County farmer and organizer for Oxfam America, for arranging this timely meeting.

Eagle Media Center: Before leaving town, I toured the new Eagle Media Center on Main Street, which houses three Hutchinson radio stations. Thanks to Dan Deming of KWBW radio for the tour. I appreciate all that Dan and his

colleagues do to keep the citizens of Reno County and the surrounding area informed.

## Welcoming Salina Teachers and Administrators Back to School

USD 305 Teachers Annual Meeting: I was in Salina Tuesday morning to speak to USD 305 school teachers at their annual meeting. It was the school district's first day back from the summer break. I was pleased to speak to them about the importance of their profession and thank them for their dedication and commitment to the students. Thank you to Dr. Rob Winter for the kind introduction. Congratulations to Lisa Hall, the Elementary Teacher of the Year, and Carlene Stueve, the Secondary Teacher of the Year.

## Visiting Organizations in Eastern Kansas

Overland Park Chamber of Commerce: I gave a legislative update to members of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, talking about recent actions of Congress that will affect the business community. While the population of Johnson County is much different than that of Johnson City, our needs as Kansans remain the same. I will continue working to represent all Kansans so that we may preserve our way of life and maintain prosperity, no matter where we live. Thank you to Bob Williams for leading the meeting and to chamber president Tracey Osborne for hosting me.

Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City: The Jewish community has been outspoken in their opposition to the genocide taking place in the Darfur region of the African country of Sudan. On Wednesday, I spoke to the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City to discuss my visit to Darfur. I appreciate the attention the Jewish community has given to this issue. Only by creating a greater awareness and putting pressure on the government leaders committing these atrocities can we affect change. Thank you to Marvin Szneler, who extended the invitation, and federation president Gina Kaiser for her introduction. I also appreciated the graciousness of Jerry Wolfe for hosting the event at his

law firm. To read more about my time in Darfur, [click here](#).

American Stroke Foundation: Also on Wednesday, I visited the American Stroke Foundation, headquartered in Mission. Stroke is the number one cause of adult disability and the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Shirley Rose, who created the foundation after her husband suffered a stroke, gave me a tour and discussed the important work of the foundation. The facility allows stroke survivors and caregivers the opportunity to socialize and work together in a supportive environment. I appreciate the work of the people at the American Stroke Foundation and thank them for the opportunity to learn more. I also thank former Attorney General Bob Stephan for joining me on the tour.

University of Kansas Medical Center: Thanks in part to recent federal funding, doctors at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) will be able to see cancer patients in western Kansas from their own offices at the Medical Center. On Wednesday, I joined Gary Doolittle, M.D., and others to talk to a patient in Hays via video conferencing equipment in their telemedicine facility. With a camera and microphone in both locations, Dr. Doolittle and others are able to see patients in various locations across the state, without having to travel. This benefits both doctors and patients and is another example of how, through technology and innovation, we can find new ways to provide important services in rural areas. Joining us in the video conference with patient Mitch Berens of Hays was KUMC Executive Vice Chancellor Barbara Atkinson, KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway and KU Hospital President and CEO Bob Page. Thanks also to the nurses who joined us from Hays Medical Center - Kelly Wagner, Shannon Karst and Shawn Mulkey.

Olathe Mayor Cable Show: Also, on Wednesday, I joined Olathe Mayor Michael Copeland for an episode of his bi-monthly television program. I have been on the program in the past and thank the Mayor for inviting me on again to discuss current issues in Congress with the people of Olathe.

Kansas Department of Transportation - Kansas Bridge Safety: On Thursday, I stopped at the Kansas Department of Transportation headquarters to meet with Secretary Deb Miller and Assistant Secretary Jerry Yunger. Following the recent bridge collapse in Minnesota, I wanted to know more about the adequacy of bridges in Kansas. Although some bridges need structural attention, Secretary Miller let me know that most are in good condition. This was an important conversation for me to have before returning to Washington, D.C., where the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold hearings to discuss the issue. I serve on this committee and want to see that the needs of Kansas bridges are addressed.

Topeka Downtown Rotary Club: After the meeting with Secretary Miller, I spoke to the 150 members of the Topeka Downtown Rotary Club. I talked to the group about the challenges we face in Kansas, but also emphasized that the work of active civic groups, like the Downtown Rotary Club, improves our quality of life. My thanks to Secretary of Revenue Joan Wagnon, who is serving as president of the club, for the invitation to attend and to Ken Grotewiel, the current assistant director of the Kansas Water Office and a former state legislator, for introducing me.

Congratulating Steven and Tamara Howe on the Birth of their Son, Isak

On Thursday, I stopped at Salina Regional Health Center to congratulate Steven and Tamara Howe on the birth of their first son, Isak. Isak was born on Tuesday. Steven works on behalf of Kansans in my Salina office. It was a joy to meet the new addition to the Howe family.

In the Office

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building, including Joan Blakely of Salina, Suzie Barten of Carlton, Darrell and Gail Miller of Mankato, Mark and Holly Ohrenberg of Minneapolis, and Scott Miller and Moriah Wagner of Manhattan. Randall, Michelle, Ryan, Eric and Kyle Pfeifer of Hill City; Dean, Sherry, Will and Cade Papes of WaKeeney; Chris, Tammy, Samantha and Amanda Baker of Derby; and Mike, Karen, Matt and Blake Pestinger of Beloit also came by for a tour.

In from Pratt were Kent, Deb and Weston Goyen and Gary, Ruthann and Matthew Barker. Janet Hixon and Jason and Sarah Reichart of Topeka were in, as were Thomas Cook, Troy Basgall, Andrew Cummings, Pam Weber and Tomi Dechant of Hays. Kathy (Heller) Shaffer, formerly of Palco, and her husband, Brent, also stopped by for a tour, along with Vernon Shaffer, formerly of Waldo.

Very truly yours,

Jerry