

9/17/2007 This Week in Congress

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September 17, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." The House was not in session most of this week in observance of the Jewish holiday, Rosh Hashanah. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Bringing Congressional Democratic Leader to the Farm

Most representatives on the House Appropriations Committee are not from farm states, so I was pleased when Democratic Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut approached me some time ago in Washington, D.C., and asked me to explain what a farmer does. We agreed it would be appropriate to bring her to Kansas to do just that. The Congresswoman serves as the chair of the House Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees the \$98 billion budget for the Department of Agriculture, FDA, Commodity Futures Trading Commission and Farm Credit Administration.

With her important position in the House directing funds for agriculture, I spent time this week showing her what life is like in Kansas and the significant role our farmers and ranchers play in the United States economy. With rural areas losing

representation in Congress, it was a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between two members of Congress who represent two very different parts of the country. I wish there were more examples in Congress of representatives, regardless of party label, working together to solve problems and improve life for Americans. I am thankful for Congresswoman DeLauro's interest, time and commitment to issues we care about in Kansas.

Life and Farming in Kansas: We started our tour in Little River at Cheryl's Cafe on Main Street. Several area agricultural producers joined us for a discussion about life and farming in Kansas. Thanks to Brian and Carolyn Dunn of St. John, Keith Miller of Great Bend, Gayla Moeckel of Plevna, Jason and Carrie Hildebrand of Stafford, Jay Warner of McPherson, Justin and Lindsey Knopf of Gypsum, Matt McCabe of Buhler, Kendall Hodgson and Randall and Nathan Olander of Little River, Kenny Carlton of Geneseo, Lori Penner of Clay Center, Harry Watts representing Kansas Farm Bureau and Dana Peterson and Marsha Boswell representing Kansas Wheat for joining us.

Agriculture Operations in Kansas: We then had the opportunity to visit Kendall Hodgson's farm outside of Little River. Kendall raises wheat, soybeans, milo, corn, alfalfa and beef cattle. Kendall provided a tour of his farm and talked about the equipment he uses in his no-till operation. He also led an informative discussion about Kansas agriculture and the challenges farmers and ranchers face.

The Link between the Federal Government and Farmers: I took the opportunity to show Congresswoman DeLauro how the funds we administer in Washington, D.C., are put to work in our U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Centers in Kansas. We stopped at the county Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Lyons to meet with State FSA Director Bill Fuller, District Conservationist Ron Klein, County Executive Director Rodney Ackerman and Matt Allen with USDA's Congressional Liaison office. One problem facing our county offices is the antiquated computers systems currently in place. It was useful to see how the system operates and talk about ways to improve it.

Health Care in Rural America: Congresswoman DeLauro also serves on the Labor and Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee. While we were in Lyons, we visited the Rice County District Hospital to talk about health care in rural America. My thanks to Administrator Bob Mullen, Board Chairman Terry David, Chief Financial Officer Terry Pound, Director of Nursing Donne Meyers, Nurse Debbie Scott and Education Coordinator Lana Schartz-Brown for their time showing us the facility and visiting with us.

Kansas State Fair: We attended the Kansas State Fair on Thursday and attended the Governor's Day Breakfast and toured the fairgrounds with State 4-H officers Ben Gates, Tory Riley, Molly Allison Gillmore and Dr. Pat McNally of Manhattan, Assistant Director and State Program Leader.

Research at Kansas State University: Kansas State University officials hosted a luncheon for the Congresswoman at Carriage Crossing in Yoder to discuss research projects going on at K-State. We learned about the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies Program in the Little Arkansans Watershed and a partnership with the City of Wichita, as well as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program in Kansas. Dr. Fred Cholick, Dean of Agriculture and Director of K-State Research and Extension, spoke to the group about food safety and security initiatives at the university. My thanks to Dr. Daryl Buchholz, Assistant Director of K-State Research and Extension; Sue Peterson, Director of Government Relations; Ron Graber, K-State Research and Extension Watershed Specialist; Frank Harper, Sedgwick County farmer; Dr. Sandy Procter, Human Nutrition professor; Ginny Barnard, Riley County Family and Consumer Science Agent; and Dr. Cholick for sharing their research and insight with us.

Renewable Energy and Ethanol Production in the Midwest: Our final stop was in Colwich at ICM, Inc. ICM is known industry-wide for its designing and building of ethanol plants across the country. We visited about renewable energy and ethanol production with Andy Bulloch, Vice President of Finance; Joe Scheer, Vice President of Operations; Dr. Scott Kohl, Technical Director of ICM Research and Development; and Greg Kressek, Director of Government Affairs.

Congresswoman DeLauro's visit came at an important time as Congress works toward completing the 2007 Farm Bill. I look forward to continuing to work with the Congresswoman on issues affecting rural America and appreciate her taking valuable time out of her schedule to spend time in Kansas. [Click here to view photos from some of the stops on the tour.](#)

Remembering the Events of September 11, Paying Tribute to our Service Members

In recognition of the sixth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, I paid tribute this week to the men and women of our armed forces who bravely and selflessly defend our country. Unfortunately this week, two more Kansans died in Iraq. My prayers are with the families of Sergeant Joel Lee Murray of Ogden and Specialist David J. Lane of Emporia.

On Tuesday, I attended a 9-11 commemorative ceremony in Anthony. The monument in Anthony to the victims of 9-11 has been designated by the State of Kansas as the state's official monument to the tragic events of that day. The memorial has steel from Ground Zero, bricks from the Pentagon and soil from the field in Pennsylvania where one of the planes crashed. At the ceremony, I took the opportunity to thank our service men and women, including those currently serving in Iraq, for their service and sacrifice. Thank you to Donna Crowe, Debbie Mangen, Pam Schott, Howard Hatfield, Cynda Carr, Shirley Barrett and Sam Beam of the Anthony 9-11 Committee for their work on the memorial and the event.

I also visited the Robert J. Dole Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Wichita this week to visit with some of our Kansas veterans. The Dole VA plays an important role in the lives of our military men and women returning from the War on Terror, as well as the lives of soldiers who served many years ago. While at the center, I visited with Director Tom Sanders and Dwayne Jaeger, Director of Behavioral Health in the Post Traumatic Stress Disorders Clinic, about ways to improve care. We owe our veterans the best treatment we can provide in thanks for what they have done for us. [Click here to view the television report from KAKE News.](#)

Welcoming Ventria Bioscience to Junction City

I attended an Open House of Ventria Bioscience's bio-processing facility on Monday. Ventria is contracting with Junction City area farmers to grow special rice from which proteins will be extracted and incorporated into oral rehydration solutions to help cure childhood diarrhea. The rice itself is then discarded. According to the World Health Organization, childhood diarrhea is the second leading killer of children, claiming nearly two million lives every year. It is encouraging to see how Kansas agriculture can play a role in improving children's health around the world. I appreciate President and CEO, as well as native Kansan, Scott Deeter for inviting me to learn more about Ventria. [Click here to view photos from the Open House.](#)

Discussing Current Issues with Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh's K-State Ag Policy Class

On Monday afternoon, I joined Dr. Barry Flinchbaugh during his agriculture policy course on the campus of Kansas State University. For several years now, I have stopped in to see Dr. Flinchbaugh and visit with his students. We have a longstanding relationship and I appreciate Dr. Flinchbaugh's experience and insight on farm policy. K-State students are privileged to learn from the best in the area of ag policy. [Click here to read the story in the K-State Collegian.](#)

Spending Time with Head Start Students in Abilene

It is critical to our children's educational success that they begin schooling on the right track. On Monday morning, I visited the Head Start classroom of Zita Gillispie at Kennedy Elementary School in Abilene. Head Start prepares children for school by enhancing their social and cognitive development through the provision of educational, health, nutritional and social services to children and their parents. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with Ms. Gillispie and meet her young students. [Click here to see a photo of me and some of the students.](#)

Hoisington Receives Grant to Purchase and Refurbish Building for New Pharmacy

I joined USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks on Friday for a check presentation to the city of Hoisington. Hoisington has been without a pharmacy since last January; however, local leaders quickly came together to address this vacancy. The rural development grant will provide funds for the community to purchase and refurbish a building to house the new pharmacy.

A community pharmacy is a part of our way of life in Kansas. In order for our towns to continue to survive, residents must have access to quality health care and services. I commend local residents and city officials for coming together on this project and thank State Director Banks, Area Specialist Brandon Prough and USDA Rural Development for making this a reality. I enjoyed visiting with Mayor Clayton Williamson, City Manager Allen Dinkel and City Council Members Steve Schrepel, Dan Witt, Karen VanBrimmer, Don Gordon, Nancy Farmer, Jim Sekavec, John Yanda and Brett Hughes at the check presentation.

Visiting Kansas Hospitals and Medical Centers

Kiowa District Hospital: I visited Kiowa on Tuesday to spend time at Kiowa District Hospital and meet with CEO Brian Stacey. The Kiowa District Hospital is a critical access hospital and has adult and pediatric services. I enjoyed visiting with Brian and others at the hospital.

Central Kansas Medical Center in Great Bend: On Friday, I traveled to Central Kansas Medical Center (CKMC) in Great Bend. Although I have visited this hospital in the past, I wanted to stop by and welcome interim CEO Sharon Lind. CKMC is a not-for-profit hospital and provides a great deal of care to folks who cannot pay for their services. CKMC continues to provide incredible health care services to Kansans and I appreciate all of their work. Thank you to Sharon, Mark Mingenback and Jette Zoller for giving me the tour.

Hearing from Stafford County Officials about Proposed BioDiesel Plant

While in the area on Friday, I stopped in St. John to meet with the board members of BioEnergy of Central Kansas. BioEnergy of Central Kansas is in the process of planning a 30 million gallon biodiesel plant. This project is a great example of local leaders coming together to enhance their rural economies. Thanks to Kent Romine, Leon Dunn, Max Liby, Charles Atkinson and Steve Freach for updating me on the status of the plant.

Attending the Kansas State Fair

I returned to the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson on Friday to spend more time visiting with Kansans before the 10-day event wrapped up. I always look forward to spending time at the fair as it gives me the chance to visit with many folks from across the state. Thanks to all who stopped by my booth and gave helpful suggestions for what I need to focus on in Washington, D.C.

Cheering on Emporia State University Football Team

On Saturday, I attended the Emporia State football game against Southwest Baptist University in Emporia. The Hornets are a talented team and beat Southwest Baptist 35 to 28. Thanks to Athletics Director Kent Weiser and President Michael Lane and his wife, Peggy, who is a professor at the university, for an enjoyable afternoon.

In the Office

Dale Wiley of Lawrence, Ron Schwartz of Garden City, John Schmid of Coffeyville and Don McNeely of Topeka were in with the Kansas Automobile Dealers Association to discuss the need to make total loss insurance data on wrecked, flooded and stolen vehicles available to consumers. Leaders of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce stopped by this week to visit. In with the group were CEO and President Amy Blankenbiller of Topeka and Jay Allbaugh, Mike Maddox and Mike Morgan of Wichita.

Tom Whitaker and Kevin Gregg of Topeka, Mike Miller of LaCrosse, Greg Orscheln of Kansas City, Chad Folkerts of Rush Center, Larry Graves of Anthony, John Prather of El Dorado and Ken Leicht of Hutchinson were in with the Kansas Motor Carriers Association to discuss a recent court decision involving the hours of service rules that regulate how much time a truck driver can be on duty. Rocky Nichols of Topeka was in with the Disability Rights Center of Kansas to advocate for funding programs that provide training and technical assistance, as well as legal support for people with disabilities. Lynn Sparkman of Hays, Dave Byford of Manhattan and Carson Johnson of Abilene were in with the Kansas Association of Christian Schools to inform me of their concerns regarding the No Child Left Behind law.

Members of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors were in to talk about the importance of life insurance and proposals being discussed by the Securities and Exchange Commission regarding mutual fund fees. In with the group were Rhonda Knudson of Great Bend, Scott Colby and Sally Andrews of Wichita, Naomi Leonard of Junction City, Greg and Sandy Braden of Topeka, Gene and Kim Warren of Manhattan, Andy Massieon of Lenexa, Bob Reynolds and Jean Curry of Salina, Jeanette Grauerholz of Republic and Shari Walls of Bennington. In from Emporia with the group were Kenneth and Janie Theel, Russell Jenkins and Dorine Harter.

Pam Dankenbring of Marysville, Brandi Bray of Scandia, Brett Skillman of New Strawn, Dana Pieper of Palco and Barb Schlesener of Hope were in our nation's capital this week for the Farm Bureau Leadership Experience Conference. The group stopped by to discuss the Clean Water Act, the House-passed 2007 Farm Bill and animal welfare. Representatives of the Kansas Telecommunications Industry Association were in to talk about the importance of making sure rural residents have access to broadband and telephone services. In with the group were Brian and Robin Boisvert of Wilson, Archie Macias of Udall, Mike and Tonya Murphy of Gorham, Terry O'Neil of Home, Mike Rice of Wamego, David Rosenthal of Topeka and Tom Gleason of Lawrence.

In for a tour of the U.S. Capitol building this week was Corey Novascone, originally of Wichita.

Very truly yours,

Jerry