

11/19/2007 This Week in Congress

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November 19, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." The House will be out of session this week in observance of Thanksgiving. Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to represent you in Congress. I wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday.

Future of Farm Bill Uncertain - Introducing Legislation to Extend Current Law

On Friday, the Senate held a vote to decide whether or not to limit debate on the 2007 Farm Bill in order to proceed to a vote in a reasonable amount of time. Most Senators objected to limiting debate because the Senate Majority Leader was blocking amendments to the legislation. Because of this, the farm bill now faces an uncertain future. It is unacceptable that we are nearing the end of the year without a farm bill for our agriculture producers.

In anticipation of this delay, I led 26 of my colleagues in introducing a one-year extension to the current farm bill. This extension will allow Congress to thoughtfully construct a farm bill, while providing assurances to the nation's producers in the coming crop year. Our producers are already burdened with many responsibilities. They should not have to worry

about whether Congress can complete a farm bill.

Until now, I have never supported an extension of the 2002 Farm Bill because I think Congress can improve the current law. I remain interested in completing a five-year farm bill that improves upon existing programs and will continue to work toward that goal. But with the Senate's inability to move a farm bill forward in an open and transparent manner, Congress must do what is best for rural America and pass a short-term extension. To allow current legislation to lapse without having some form of farm policy in place is simply irresponsible.

After arriving back in Kansas on Friday morning, I stopped at the National Association of Farm Broadcasters annual convention to visit with the broadcasters about the farm bill. I always appreciate the hospitality of the farm broadcasters and the work they do in keeping Kansans informed about agriculture and rural issues.

[Click here to read more about my bill to extend the farm bill and to listen to me talk about this topic.](#)

Addressing Illegal Immigration and Strengthening our Border

The most frequent topic of conversation I have with Kansans as I travel across the state is about the effects of illegal immigration on our communities. Many folks are rightfully frustrated at the lack of progress in securing our border and enforcing immigration laws. I believe the first priority in dealing with illegal immigration must be to secure the border.

This week, I sponsored legislation that addresses illegal immigration by securing our border with 8,000 new Border Patrol agents and making use of technology to monitor and protect our national boundaries. The Secure America with Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act also deters illegal immigration by requiring employers to verify the legal status of all workers and expanding interior enforcement of our immigration laws. The SAVE Act already has the support of more than 100 Republican and Democratic Members of Congress.

Continuing Discussions about Lack of Veterinarians in Rural Areas

I continued to discuss the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) implementation of the National Veterinary Medical Service Act this week with Gale Buchanan, Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics at USDA. I was joined by Members of Congress from Georgia, Iowa, Colorado and Minnesota in expressing our desire to see USDA immediately move forward with regulations to implement a student loan reimbursement program for young veterinarians who wish to begin a large animal practice in rural areas. We expressed our willingness to assist in the efforts, but emphasized the need for USDA to begin work on its proposal.

Cheering on St. Francis and Smith Center High School Football Teams

The excitement for Kansas high school football was high this weekend as teams across the state played in state semifinal games. I joined St. Francis and Smith Center fans in Smith Center on Friday night for the 2-1A playoff game. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the coin flip before kick-off. Both teams have experienced a tremendous amount of success this season. St. Francis went into the game with a record of 11-1, while Smith Center entered at 11-0. It was a good game with Smith Center coming away with the win at 44-6. My thanks and congratulations to the players, coaches and fans of these two teams for allowing me to be a part of the event.

Visiting with Agricultural Producers at the Kansas Commodity Classic

Before returning to Washington, D.C., I stopped at the Kansas Commodity Classic in Salina. The convention is hosted by the Kansas Corn Growers Association, Kansas Association of Wheat Growers and the Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with agricultural producers from across the state about many current issues.

Big First Listening Tour Continues

My Big First Listening Tour continued this week with a stop in Saline County to visit with residents in Salina about issues important to them. Next Monday, I will be at the Wichita County Business CARE Center in Leoti from 3:15-4:15 p.m. to hear from area residents. [Click here](#) to view other stops scheduled for next week and to stay up-to-date on tour times, dates and locations.

In the Office

Kenlon Johannes and Dennis Hupe of Topeka, Bill Ayres and Gary Louis of Overland Park, and Harold Kraus of Hays were in with the National Biodiesel Board to talk about efforts to support the biodiesel industry. Pat Stein of Wright was in with Torsten Energy to tell me about his company's planned biodiesel plants in Greensburg and Dodge City. Medicaid Director for the State of Kansas Andy Allison of Topeka was in to discuss Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Chris Burger and Brad Schumacher of Hays and Natalie Fischer of Salina were in with the Society for Human Resource Management to talk about improving the Family Medical Leave Act.

Gay Beth Moore and Bob Briggs of Copeland, Glenn and Barbara Walker of Brookville, and Jay and Karen Lindsay of Luray visited my office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building.

Very turly yours,

Jerry