

## 3/24/2008 This Week in Congress

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March 24, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you and your family had a nice Easter. Because of the spring district work period, I will be in Kansas this week with Congress back in session on March 31. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Good News Announced this Week for Greensburg and Kiowa County

Greensburg and Kiowa County received two pieces of good news this week. The first in an announcement that USDA Rural Development will increase community facility grant funding eligibility from 35 percent to 60 percent for the rebuilding of Greensburg and Kiowa County. The additional grant assistance will help local officials repair or replace community facilities that provide health care, telecommunications, public safety and government services. [Click here to read more about this increase in eligibility.](#)

The second piece of good news came on Thursday when the U.S. Department of Labor awarded Greensburg and Kiowa County a \$2.3 million grant to be used in the ongoing recovery and rebuilding process. This grant will help the city and county hire personnel to assist in the long-term recovery effort. The grant is the result of legislation Senator Pat Roberts and I pushed in the House and Senate. [Click here to read more about this grant.](#)

There is a little bit of good news everyday in Greensburg. It is the small steps along with the backing of friends, neighbors and even strangers from all parts of the state, country and world that help in the continuation of the rebuilding process.

### Working to Reduce Railcar Delays

Kansas cooperatives recently contacted me about a backlog of railcars to unload grain. The delays average from 10-14 days and are a result of higher grain prices and bumper crops in some parts of Kansas. On behalf of the cooperatives, I contacted the Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad and BNSF Railway and asked they focus on working together to end the delays. I will continue to monitor their progress and work with both companies and the Wichita Terminal Authority to find a solution to this problem.

### Discussing Health Care with Kansas Home Care Association Executive Director

I met with Kansas Home Care Association Executive Director Jane Kelly this week to talk about home care, particularly in rural areas. Home care is a health care option that offers medical care and support services in the home. Jane shared her support for a legislative package that would ensure Kansas Medicare beneficiaries have access to home health services.

### Touring Hawker Beechcraft and Discussing Aviation Issues

Legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration is pending and is of great importance to our general aviation manufacturers in Kansas, as well as our state's many airplane owners and pilots. I serve on the Aviation Subcommittee and this week visited Hawker Beechcraft to meet with Chairman and CEO Jim Schuster. Hawker Beechcraft employs thousands of Kansans, primarily in Wichita, and also operates a plant in Salina that employs more than 450 people. I enjoyed discussing several aviation issues with the CEO and visiting with many employees as I toured the plant.

#### Visiting with Kansas County Officials

On Wednesday, I spoke during the semi-annual meeting of Southeast County officials. I provided an update on what is going on in Congress and how it relates to our Kansas counties. I enjoyed the discussion about how we can best work together at all levels of government to see good things happen for our state. I received an update of recovery efforts in this part of Kansas that was so adversely affected by last year's flood waters. Thanks to Greenwood County Commissioners Linda Snyder, Edward Buckle and Stanley Skaer for the invitation.

#### Learning about Outreach Services Offered at Butler County Community College

On Thursday, I visited Butler County Community College in El Dorado to meet with President Jackie Vietti and board trustee members. Butler County Community College serves students from across the state. I enjoyed seeing the campus and learning about the many associate degree options and outreach services offered at the college. Much of BCCC's service area includes the First Congressional District.

Thank you to President Vietti and board trustees Ted Albright, Betty Corbin, Ron Engelbrecht, Dalton Patterson and Carter Zerbe. I also enjoyed seeing a former Plainville High School classmate Sharon DeBolt Rogers while there.

### Discussing Agriculture Issues at U.S. Ag Bank

I visited with the U.S. Ag Bank management team in Wichita this week. We discussed the recent volatility in grain markets, the prospect of finishing a new farm bill and the importance of the agriculture industry and rural America having access to credit. This was my first visit with Darryl Rhodes since he became President and CEO a year ago.

### Talking about Crime in Kansas with U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren

On Friday, I met with Eric Melgren, U.S. Attorney for Kansas, for an update on crime in the state. We discussed a number of issues, including civil litigation, methamphetamine, crimes against children, gangs and violent crime and immigration offenses. As a U.S. Attorney, Eric oversees hundreds of cases a year and has a good understanding of the challenges faced by federal and state law enforcement. I appreciated him and his assistant attorneys taking time to share their knowledge and discussing what I can focus on at the federal level to help fight crime in Kansas.

### Reviewing Kansas Pharmacy Issues

At the request of their representatives in Washington, D.C., I visited Walgreen's in Hays on Saturday to meet with Store Manager Chris Becker, District Manager Jeff McKillop, Pharmacy Manager Greg Bethel and pharmacists Chad Ullom and Dustin Smith. We discussed Medicare reimbursement using AMP, Part D implementation, restrictions on controlled substances and the shortage of pharmacists.

#### Final Stops Scheduled for Big First Listening Tour

I continued my Listening Tour this week with stops in Coldwater, Ashland, Hazelton and Pratt. I will complete my 69 town hall meetings for 2008 with the list below. You can also [click here](#) to view the full list.

Monday, March 24

Greeley County Tour Stop, Tribune

Time: 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. MDT

Location: Greeley County Hospital Lobby, 506 Third St.

Hamilton County Tour Stop, Syracuse

Time: 1:00-2:00 p.m. MDT

Location: Hamilton County Library Meeting Room, 102 W. Avenue C

Kearny County Tour Stop, Lakin

Time: 3:30-4:30 p.m. CDT

Location: Kearny County Hospital, Classroom, 500 Thorpe

Tuesday, March 25

Haskell County Tour Stop, Satanta

Time: 8:15-9:15 a.m.

Location: Centera Bank Fiesta Room, 218 N. Sequoyah St.

Stanton County Tour Stop, Johnson City

Time: 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Location: Stanton County High School Auditorium, 200 W. Weaver

Grant County Tour Stop, Ulysses

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Location: Rotary Club, Grant County Library, 215 E. Grant

Wednesday, March 26

Logan County Tour Stop, Oakley

Time: 3:45-4:45 p.m.

Location: Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center, Room A, 703 W. 2nd St.

Thursday, March 27

Scott County Tour Stop, Scott City

Time: 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Location: Main Street

Lane County Tour Stop, Dighton

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: Main Street

In the Office

Nick Zerr of Grainfield and Carrie Hodges of Kansas City were in representing the Kansas Society for Clinical Laboratory Science to talk about the future shortage of laboratory workers in our health care system. Diane Gjerstad, Winston Brooks, Connie Dietz and Betty Arnold of Wichita were in with Wichita Public Schools to discuss No Child Left Behind. Dr. Ralph Richardson of Manhattan was in with Kansas State University to discuss issues facing veterinary medicine, including the shortage of large animal veterinarians.

Marty Wright of Strong City, Sherry Jones of Mulvane, Michael Hamilton of Paola, Randell Collier of Towanda, Jo Ann Wells of Meade and Debbie Wright of Dwight were in with the Kansas Association of Postmasters to talk about sick leave for federal employees and voting by mail. Kayla Houghton of Barnard was in with the National Youth Leadership Council to learn more about my role as an elected official.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Kevan Boss of Park City, Teresa Vasquez of Topeka, Lacey Gassman of Atchison, Chris Harris of Overland Park and Mike Nolan of Deerfield. Also in were Monte, Kris and Dylan Carr of Lakin; Shawn, Dana, Caleb and Carson Rich of Spearville; Fred, Jeannie, Mike, Melissa, Maria and Mardi Traskowsky of Woodbine; and Thad Russell and Miranda Harper of Marysville.

In from Salina were Mark, Susan and Steve Olson; Tom Sellers; Mark, Jeanette, Brad and Maureen Mikinski; and Wayne and Ann Johnson. Alex and Stephanie Nichepor of Ness City stopped by to take a tour while visiting their daughter, Tiffany, who is currently serving as an intern in my Washington, D.C., office.

Several school groups spent their spring break in Washington, D.C., and took a tour of the Capitol. Thomas Wesoloski of Junction City led students from Junction City Middle School, Steve McAllister of Lawrence led students from the University of Kansas School of Law, Rick Blosser of Hays led seniors from Hays High School and Jay Doornbos of Council Grove led students from Council Grove High School.

Very truly yours,

Jerry