

4/21/2008 This Week in Congress

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April 21, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Welcoming the Full Reopening of Beef Trade with South Korea

Friday brought welcome news for our cattle producers, beef processors and rural communities when South Korea announced plans to fully reopen its market to U.S. beef from cattle of all ages. Korea was one of the largest importers of U.S. beef prior to the closing of its border in December 2003 when a single case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in a Canadian-born dairy cow.

Since that time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture aggressively implemented additional safety checks in the beef system to further guarantee the safety of American beef. The agreement with South Korea is based on international standards and World Animal Health Organization guidelines. Trade of all U.S. beef and beef products from cattle of all ages is scheduled to resume in mid-May with appropriate Specified Risk Materials removed.

With input costs so high, now is the time we need every possible market for Kansas cattlemen. We must now focus on countries like Japan and China that remain closed based on unscientific restrictions and encourage officials to follow South Korea's lead in fully reopening markets based on international standards.

Welcoming Pope Benedict XVI to the United States

On Wednesday, I attended a White House ceremony welcoming Pope Benedict XVI, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, to the United States. This is Pope Benedict's first visit to the U.S. since assuming the role three years ago. Wednesday also marked Pope Benedict's 81st birthday.

At a time when America is polarized by partisanship, religion and economic status, the Pope's message of reconciliation and hope is more important than ever. The Pope arrived in the U.S. on Tuesday. His six-day trip also included a visit to New York City.

Another One-Week Farm Bill Extension

For the fourth time, farmers' interests have been put on the back burner while urban Members of Congress take their

time finding ways to pay for their priorities in a bill that has less and less to do with agriculture. The House and Senate passed another one-week extension to the farm bill this week and President Bush has signed it. This additional one-week extension is no different than previous ones. Leadership in both the House and Senate have proven unable to bring a bill through the conference committee. I am hopeful that upcoming discussions will be more productive and bring the focus back to rural America.

House Passes Bill to Ensure Access to Student Loans

Due to the recent credit crunch, some lenders have quit participating in the federally-backed student loan program and are no longer offering student loans. The decrease in participating lenders has made it more difficult for Kansas students to obtain college loans, which can compromise the ability to complete an education. This week, I supported House passage of legislation that makes certain students have access to loans. The Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act increased the total amount of federally-backed loans that students can borrow and strengthened the Education Department's role in making sure loans are available. Ensuring continued access to college loans is important for Kansas students and their families.

Meeting Kansas Veterans at the World War II Memorial

A group of World War II veterans from southeast Kansas traveled to our nation's capital this week to view the World War II Memorial on the National Mall. I joined former Kansas Senator and World War II veteran Bob Dole to welcome the veterans to Washington, D.C., and thank them for their service. Tracy Campbell of Burlington helped put the trip together with the help of the nonprofit group Honor Flight, which organizes free one-day trips for veterans. More than a dozen Southern Coffey County High School students accompanied the veterans on the trip and held a ceremony at the World War II Memorial to honor those who served in the war and to present Senator Dole with an American flag. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

Community Leaders from Western Kansas Visit Washington, D.C.

Community leaders from western Kansas traveled to Washington, D.C., this week and received updates on several important congressional issues, such as essential air service, critical access hospitals, immigration and the farm bill.

Attendees from Dodge City were Cindy Malek, Casey Pennington, Joan Knight, Ryan Carpenter, Ken Strobel, Cherise Tieben, Rick Sowers, Ed Elam, Kim Goodnight and John Swayze. In from Hays were Toby Dougherty, Barbara Wasinger, Ron Mellick, Chris Channell and Robert Muirhead. Attendees from Great Bend were Bill Berryman, Nick Gregory and Jan Peters.

In from Liberal were Danny and Kay Burtzloff, Joe and Elizabeth Denoyer, Chris and Marieka Ford, Shannon Francis, Debbie Giskie, Toby and Daryl Hale, David Harrison, Joyce Hibler, Larry Howell, Larry Koochel, Doug LaFreniere, Karen LaFreniere, Mike Shannon, Don Rash, Rozelle and Darrel Webb and CJ and Linda Wettstein. Attendees from Garden City were Reynaldo Mesa, Randy Partington, Eric Depperschmidt, Dave Crase, J.R. Behan, Rachelle Powell and Bob Halloran.

In the Office

Bret Healy of Olathe was in with the Kansas Bioscience Authority to bring me up to date on bioscience issues in Kansas. Karen Hauser of Salina and Ted Hauser of Medicine Lodge were in with Catholic Charities of Salina to talk about helping the hungry and needy in our communities. James Epp, Mike Armstrong and David Eggars of Wyandotte were in with American Water Works Association to discuss important water treatment and delivery issues and talk about how the federal government can support water infrastructure.

Debbie Logsdon of Douglass, Earl Carter of Augusta and Shane Michael of Wichita were in with the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace to share their thoughts on the availability of H1B visas. Kansas Representative Peggy Mast of Emporia was in to talk about rail infrastructure legislation. Bob Stuever of Colwich was in with the American Institute of Aeronautics to discuss workforce development and the need to maintain U.S. leadership in aviation. Representatives from Kansas rural telephone companies were in to discuss telecommunication issues currently before the Federal Communication Commission. The group included Catherine Moyer and Dick Veach of Ulysses, Terry Force of Wheaton, Rhonda Goddard of Penokee, Glenn Lambert of Palco, Gordon and Maxine Mikesell of Clearwater, Jim Harries of WaKeeney and Wilda Pentola of Girard.

Fort Hays State University President Dr. Edward Hammond was in with National Collegiate Fraternities and Sororities to visit about legislation I am sponsoring to make contributions for infrastructure and safety improvements to collegiate housing tax-deductible. Representatives of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists were in to talk about education funding for Advanced Practice Nurses, Medicare reimbursement cuts and anesthesia payment and teaching rules. In with the group were Kyle Nevills of Garden City, Nancy Whitson of Topeka, Katharine Clark of Wichita, Vance Crain of Kansas City, Ruth Morris of Overland Park, Paul Hertel of Shawnee and Eric Gray of Olathe.

Dr. Donna Sweet of Wichita was in with the American College of Physicians to share with me news of her nomination to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission. Cheryl Semmel of Topeka, Beth Reust of Plainville, Chuck Schmidt of Independence and Dr. Jill Shackelford of Kansas City were in with the Kansas Association of School Administrators to discuss challenges associated with No Child Left Behind, teacher recruitment issues and the continued need to help provide technology to rural schools. Dr. Michael Whitehair of Abilene was in with the American Veterinary Medical Association to express his thoughts about animal drug user fee legislation.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building. Among the visitors were Stephanie and Alexis Nichepor of Ness City; Laurel and Donna Patrick of Marquette; Ann and Megan Sample of Lindsborg; Mark, Carolyn, Patrick and Katherine Lacy of Overland Park; Frank and Denise Novascone of Wichita; and Lonny and Debbie McLinn of Ulysses. In from Salina were Betty, Penny and Bob Noller; David and Lynne Maxwell; and David and Betty Atkinson. Wendell and Yu Yen Smith of Sterling also stopped by, as did Brian Weber of Dodge City.

Very truly yours,

Jerry