

5/12/2008 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

May 12, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." The speech I delivered during the MidAmerica Nazarene University commencement last week is now available on my Web site. [Click here to read it](#) and [click here to see photos from the event](#). I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Farm Bill Conference Committee Work Largely Finished

It appears the conference report for the 2008 Farm Bill may be filed in the coming days and brought before the full House and Senate for a vote. I remain concerned that many of the provisions in this bill are a step in the wrong direction and will weaken rather than strengthen the value of the current safety net for producers. I appreciate the input I have received from producers across Kansas during the writing of this farm bill. This week, I will try to represent your voices in my vote as I think critically about how this piece of legislation will affect production agriculture for the next five years.

Introducing Legislation to Ease Path for Veterans to Become Paramedics

American communities across the country are experiencing difficulty recruiting, training and retaining qualified Emergency Medical Service (EMS) personnel. Kansas EMS has taken the initiative to address this issue and can serve as a model for other states. That is why earlier this week I introduced legislation to relieve the shortage of emergency medical personnel, especially in rural areas, by streamlining civilian paramedic training for returning veterans who have emergency medical experience from the military. [Click here to learn more about this legislation.](#)

Veterans Committee Focuses on Suicide Prevention and Treatment

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on Wednesday regarding the troubling occurrence of suicide among veterans. Testifying was Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary James Peake.

The hearing called attention to the need for a better tracking system of veteran suicide data and the importance of making treatment available for service members and veterans who need help. This month VA began a benefits outreach program contacting nearly 570,000 recently discharged veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom that have not sought VA services. Secretary Peake has also directed the creation of an independent workgroup to assess VA suicide prevention programs.

Visiting with Farmers and Ranchers at the Annual 3i Show in Great Bend

On Friday after returning home from Washington, D.C., I stopped in Great Bend to visit with farmers and ranchers at the annual 3i Show. I wanted to use this time to gather input from Kansas producers regarding the latest developments on the farm bill. The 3i Show, which started as a traveling exhibit in 1950, represents industry, implements and irrigation and is held each spring alternating between Great Bend and Garden City. Thanks to Eddie Estes and the Western Kansas Manufactures Association for organizing the annual show. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

Participating in the 95th Annual McPherson All Schools Day Parade

This week, McPherson continued its long standing tradition of the All Schools Day Parade, held on the second Friday in May every year since 1917. Along with students from area schools, I rode down Main Street as a part of the "Stars on Parade." The parade was part of several days of events celebrating McPherson County students and schools. Thanks to Marvin Peters for driving me in his 1930 Model A car. [Click here to view photos from the parade.](#)

Attending the 19th Annual Hays High School Dinner Show

This weekend, I attended the 19th annual Hays High School dinner show, "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." The dinner show features the Chamber Singers, a select singing and dance group of 28 students. My daughter Alex is a part of this group and Robba accompanies them. I waited tables during the show. Congratulations to Elise Peterson, director of vocal music, for another successful dinner show.

In the Office

Jerry McReynolds of Woodston and John Thaemert of Sylvan Grove were in with the National Association of Wheat Growers to discuss the farm bill conference report. Members of Kansas Electric Cooperatives Inc. were in to discuss the challenges faced by electric cooperatives in supplying energy to rural Kansas. The group included Allan Miller of Norton, Kirk and Jessica Thompson and Cliff and Helen Friesen of Meade, Dave Schneider of WaKeeney, Gilbert Berland of Damar, Clare Gustin of Hays, Carl Hubbell of Spearville, Pat Morse and Josh Schmidt of Dodge City, Ron Holsteen of Altamont and Phil Wages of Topeka.

Dr. Linda Redford, Director of the Central Plains Geriatric Education Center in Kansas City, was in to discuss the need to provide specialized education to professionals who care for geriatric patients. Dr. Ed Leonard, President of Bethany College in Lindsborg, stopped by the office to discuss the Higher Education Act. Ray Zimbelman and Tim and T.J. Burr, all of St. Francis, also stopped by to visit.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office for a tour of the United States Capitol this week, including Don and Pat Hysko of Wichita, John and Lana Janssen of Greensburg, Andrew and Rita Naab of Spearville and Rob and Becky Stickney of Medicine Lodge. Also stopping by were Bob and Donna Nattier of North Newton with their grandson, Tyler Nattier of Wichita.

Very truly yours,

Jerry