

Washington comes to Norton

Tour stops at bank

Congressman talks to people about issues

By VERONICA MONIER
U.S. Representative Jerry Moran touched on some important issues Thursday afternoon when he stopped at the Gallery of Also Rans in Norton as part of his Town Hall Meetings tour.



Congressman Jerry Moran spoke with Jay Shelton and Joel Hrahe on Thursday before a question and answer session held in the "Also Ran" gallery on the mezzanine level at First State Bank.

Rep. Moran said Norton was his 26th stop on the 69 county tour. "I'm trying to go to places that deal with travel and tourism," he said. "Kansas has a lot to be proud of and sometimes people need to be reminded of that."

He said he tries to focus on agriculture, health care and issues relating to small businesses in congress.

The cost of health care, he said, is No. 1. "All of us face the cost of health care," he said.

One aspect of health care is veterans' benefits.

Rep. Moran said congress rejected the president's budget proposal where veterans' health care was a concern. He said the president wanted only a half percent increase in the budget and also wanted to have a large annual fee and co-payments.

He said the House approved an 11 percent increase in the budget. He said congress was trying to keep up, but because of increased demands, it was hard.

"I know 11 percent may sound like a lot," he said. "But, it isn't much when compared to each veteran. The problem is more veterans are going to VA services because of rising costs in prescriptions. We're struggling to keep up with the prescription costs."

He said his goal was to get all veterans a card so they could go to whatever hospital they wanted. But, he said, that is a long way off.

Rep. Moran also talked about No Child Left Behind.

He said the mandate had very little support in Kansas. He voted against it and now finds it ironic that he is in Washington trying to find money to pay for a bill he didn't want.

He said he thinks the last things students need is to be taken out of the classroom to be tested on how much they know.

"It's a flawed theory," he said. "I think that every student can improve, but 99 percent, which is what the bill demands, can't perform at a certain level."

Schools are now teaching students to pass the tests, rather than teaching them what they need to know, because no school wants to be branded a failure.

Another problem is that he feels it's going to ruin the teaching profession.

"They are going to start saying it's not worth it," he said. "We

can't afford to lose good teachers because of over testing and stifling regulations.

"The thing that's getting lost is people tend to forget what a great school system Kansas has."

He said congress is looking at ways to make the mandate more flexible, including giving states the option of not participating.

Mr. Moran also talked about:

- Energy. He said a bill, which has been passed in the House five times but always stalls in the Senate, is designed to reduce imported and nonrenewable energy. He said it would move the country toward alternative fuels, like ethanol, soy diesel and wind.
- Social Security reform. Now is the time to sit down and fix the problem, he said, but it has become a political issue. He has expressed skepticism on the president's idea for private accounts. He said it will cost between \$1-2 trillion to transition into personal accounts. That's money that will just be going into the national deficit. Also, if those with personal accounts make a bad investment, they'll want the government to fix it.
- "This needs to be a bipartisan decision," he said. "Personal accounts might have some place in the reform, but it needs to be explained to people."
- He said it will only apply to people under 55 and who volun-

teer to do it. And, he said, if it happens, it would probably do so as a pilot plan.

He didn't see anything major happening in the near future.

- Amnesty and immigration. He said he thinks they need reform.
- "I don't want people here illegally," he said. "I don't think it's right to reward people for being here illegally, while punishing those who are trying to go through the legal system."
- Central American Free Trade Agreement. He has concerns about the agreement, but hasn't taken a position. He said trade matters, but there is more to it than tariffs. And there are many things the agreement doesn't cover.

Senator's aides visit at city office

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
U.S. Senator Sam Brownback's Chief of Staff Robert Wasinger and Legislative Aide Riley Scott stopped in Norton Wednesday at the city offices to hear what was on people's minds and tell them what is happening in Washington.



Robert Wasinger

Mr. Wasinger said that Sen. Brownback supported the compromise that ended the senate filibuster because the filibuster was holding up other important pieces of legislation. However, he said, the compromise will only hold until President Bush's first Supreme Court nominee.

The senator is against the current transportation bill, Mr. Wasinger said, because it is too big. If it gets slimmed down a little, he can back it. Right now it will just increase the deficit.

The legislature hopes to increase ethanol production to about eight billion gallons by 2012, he said. This will help reduce America's dependence on oil. Wind energy is also a component of the bill.

City Administrator Rob Lawson asked about the Community Development Block Grant money.

Mr. Wasinger the senator thinks the program should remain but that it needs changing.

"This needs to be reorganized and refigured," Mr. Wasinger said. "Kansas is 49th in money. The formula is set up to favor big, urban areas."

City Councilwoman Elaine Mann noted that she hoped the senator would stay on top of the issue as it is an important one to small towns like Norton, which have to put in expensive facilities like sewer and water plants.

"We're caught in a really tight spot out here in the rural area," she said.

Mr. Wasinger said that after the president won, he rolled out his social security plan. He said that while the problems of social security need to be addressed, it probably won't be with this Congress.

The ground work hasn't been done on the issue, he said. There

has been no conversation with the country.

Mr. Scott talked about the farm bill, which will be up for renewal in 2007.

The new secretary of agriculture, Mike Johanns, should be good for the farmers, he said, since he is from Nebraska.

Sen. Brownback is on agriculture appropriations, Mr. Scott said, and that's where the power is because it doesn't matter what legislation is passed if there is no money to go with it.

The senator is also a strong proponent of the new Homestead Act, he said.

Any county which has lost 10 percent of its population over the last 20 years would be eligible for tax credits and venture capital.

Mr. Scott said about 50 percent of Kansas counties would qualify.

This worked in the 70s to help the cities as people fled to suburbia, he said.

The men asked for help since many things get introduced into the legislature at the last minute.

"If you see something introduced call us if it would be detrimental to Kansas," Mr. Wasinger said. "You can help us."

The participants, including Mr. Lawson, Mrs. Mann, councilman Jim Williams, City Clerk Darla Ellis, Chamber of Commerce Manager Karla Reed and Carolyn Applegate, thanked the men for coming to Norton to visit.

North Dividers hear tips for good eating

North Dividers Family and Community Education Unit met with Rose Mathes. Seven members answered roll call.

The lesson was "Color Me Healthy", given by Donna Roberts. Enjoying fruits and vegetables is important, she said. The more color, the more antioxidants. Eating different colors of fruits and vegetables satisfies tastes and textures while increasing protection against diseases.

Donna Roberts received the

hostess gift.

The unit is planning a trip out-of-town in June. The last week of July will be fair week and the club will be sponsoring a booth.

The district recognition meeting was held May 2 in Atwood with seven North Dividers attending.

Judy Davis talked about the history of tea. Standard for making and drinking are black, oolong and green tea.

Tea has many health benefits, she said. It helps the blood, is a

tonic and good for the heart.

Norton County received an award for 100 percent in family community education service. The Jolly Mothers club was recognized for 55 years as a unit. CeDoris McMullen received a 65-year membership certificate.

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Note: All Visiting Specialist Clinics, Unless Emergency, Need to be Scheduled Prior to Day of Visit