




### Weather Corner



**Tonight...**Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow showers in the evening... Then partly cloudy after midnight. Lows in the lower 20s. Northwest winds 10 to 15 mph.

**Saturday...**Mostly cloudy in the morning then becoming partly sunny. Isolated sprinkles or flurries in the afternoon. Highs around 40. Northwest winds 15 to 20 mph. Saturday night...Mostly cloudy in the evening then becoming partly cloudy. Isolated flurries in the evening. Lows around 18. Northwest winds around 10 mph.

**Sunday...**Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 40s. Northwest winds around 10 mph. Sunday night...Partly cloudy. Lows around 17.

**Monday** and Monday night... Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 30s. Lows around 19.

**Tuesday...**Mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 40s. Tuesday night... Mostly cloudy. Lows around 16.

**Wednesday...**Colder. Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of light snow. Highs in the mid 30s. Wednesday night...Mostly cloudy. Lows around 13.

**Thursday...**Mostly sunny. Highs in the upper 20s. Thursday's low, high: 21, 29

# Farming, health care highlight Congressman's comments

By Pat Schiefen  
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Goodland Star-News

Congressman Jerry Moran stopped to talk with about 30 voters in Goodland Wednesday morning, fielding questions on agriculture and health care, which he said we two of the top issues in Washington this year.

The representative noted that disaster assistance for farmers had passed, and that the Department of Veteran Affairs increased the mileage reimbursement for vets who have to go to another town for health care from 11 cents a mile (started in 2002) to 28.5 cents a mile.

He said he was disappointed that Goodland did not get a VA outreach clinic for this area, although he thought that having one in Burlington was still an improvement for veterans who used to have to drive to Hays or Denver.

"I believe greatly in leadership," Moran said to the 11th class of Leadership Sherman County. "If good things happen in the community, the people make it happen."

"I also hope that the No Child Left Behind mandates will be repealed or reformed. Teaching is a noble profession. It is a challenge to keep and recruit teachers, and the No Child Left Behind Act has made that harder."

"In 2008, I hope to have worked on a satisfactory ag bill," Moran said.

Moran, who was on his way to catch a plane at the Denver airport after the holiday recess, said he always stops first in Goodland on his way back to Washington.

"I have always been impressed with the community and the ag community, with its younger set of farmers," he said.

John Golden, an area farmer and civic leader, asked if pinto beans will be part of the farm bill, and



Congressman Jerry Moran visited with about 30 voters Wednesday morning at the Northwest Kansas Technical College Student Union. Moran talked about what Congress had done last year and what the top issues would be this year, including health and agriculture bills. Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

Moran said he is working on that.

Betty Jean Schields, a member of the Sherman County Farm Bureau board and farmer, asked about crop insurance and how much it costs. Moran said that farmers in Iowa, Illinois and Ohio say they do not want to be forced to have crop insurance and that has been a problem.

Moran said that he wants to keep direct payments for farmers and viable crop insurance in the farm bill. When Farm Bureau and other groups come to Congress to talk, he said, they need to go talk to members outside the ag areas so they understand the issues.

Ken Klemm, a buffalo rancher and part of the Buffalo Guys, asked Moran if he could do anything about the fact that for buffalo the USDA inspects the meat at slaughter and again at each of the different processing steps, such as grinding or making into jerky. Moran said he would like more information and Klemm said he would send him some.

"The No. 1 domestic issue will be the cost of health care," he said.

Goodland Regional Medical Center Administrator Jay Jolly said that the hospital is having problems getting ambulance bills

paid for the ambulances based in Kanorado and Brewster. Jolly said Medicare won't pay a set fee because the ambulances are making runs of less than 35 miles.

Jolly said they are also having billing and reimbursement problems with the telemedicine oncology clinic with the University of Kansas Medical Center. He said many specialists are not willing to travel to rural areas, and that telemedicine could help fill the gap, if the government programs will help pay for it.

At the present, the hospital uses telemedicine for child psychology and oncology, or cancer. He said they would like to be able to use emergency room doctors from hospitals in Denver and other cities to help get patients ready for transport there.

Jolly said that Blue Cross/Blue Shield seems to be opposed to telemedicine and asked if Moran could help, adding that he thought telemedicine could help to keep costs down and provide access to specialized care.

Moran said his district, which covers about two-thirds of Kansas, has 75 hospitals, the most for any district in Congress.

# Firefighters propose rural fire chief

By Tom Betz  
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Goodland Star-News

Sherman County Commissioners, members of the rural fire board and volunteer firemen tried for more than an hour and a half Monday to find ways to stretch the district budget to pay for a full-time fire chief without coming up with a solution.

The volunteers asked that Alan David, the Goodland rural fire chief, be named as full-time rural fire chief to oversee the Goodland, Kanorado and Brewster departments.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said he felt it was a good idea, but asked if there would be enough money in the fire budget to pay him.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he was in favor of a full-time chief, which he said would be good for all three departments. He said he was concerned about fitting the salary and benefits in the budget.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said he understood the need, but felt the county has not looked at all the options, and that they should be working with the city, which has a full-time chief, rather than increasing the district's costs.

David said he felt there is enough work for a full-time chief, and that a person in that position could help bring in more grants to pay for equipment and a new fire house.

Richard Allaman, a fire board member and farmer who lives in the district, said he felt it was the consensus of the board to have one chief over both the city and county departments.

Tiede said that is something that might be worked out down the road, but felt that for now, the county needs to have a full-time person to help the three rural departments with their paperwork and equipment needs.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said the fire district has a separate tax levy and is a separate taxing entity. She said all the expenses of a full-time fire chief would have to come out of the district budget, and that the district presently has a 5 mill cap. She said the current levy of 4.7 mills brings in about \$190,000 a year, but the district has a budget of \$274,000 because of a large carryover from the previous year.

David asked if the county could split the cost with the district. Tiede said that would require the chief to have two sets of duties.

Rumpel said she did not know, but that someone who knows more about state budget law would have

to answer that question. David said he would like to discuss the option with County Attorney Bonnie Selby.

Thomas said he thought the money could come from the existing budget, adding that he had not figured on having to pay all the employee benefits out of the district budget. He said that could make the district budget too tight to be able to continue to improve the equipment.

Volunteer fireman Stan Duell, owner of NAPA Auto Parts, asked if the tax levy could be raised. He said it would be good to ask those living in the fire district if they are willing to pay more to have better fire protection. Rumpel said the district tax levy could be raised to 7 mills, which would bring in about \$80,000 more per year, with approval of district voters.

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