

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Joint House Agriculture and Natural Resources
and Senate Agriculture Committee Meeting

The Joint House Agriculture and Natural Resources and Senate Agriculture Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Taddiken at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 1, 2007 in the Old Supreme Court Room (313-S) of the Capitol.

Chairman Taddiken introduced Congressman Jerry Moran.

Congressman Moran said he was in the state for sixty-nine (69) town hall meetings to address the citizens of Kansas about the importance of the farm bill.

He noted that President Bush had introduced the federal farm bill yesterday. Congressman Moran stated the farm bill is important for Kansans because the state's economy is significantly affected by agriculture. The farm bill includes energy conservation, renewable fuels, CREP, cellulosic for biofuels, the food stamp program, nutrition awareness programs and grain commodities. Water usage for irrigation and ethanol production is also included in the bill.

In hearings recently with the House Agriculture Committee a number of constituents from Kansas presented their concerns regarding farmers raising fruits and vegetables having the same benefits as those raising grain products. Congressman Moran mentioned the average age of a farmer in Kansas is 59 years old.

In a forty-five minute briefing with Secretary Johannes regarding the proposed federal farm bill, Congressman Moran said the most important item for consideration is the budget. The federal budget is scheduled to be adopted in March or April. At that time it will be determined if the necessary funds are in the budget for the programs included in the farm bill.

An additional issue in the farm bill is the Arkansas River area in CREP, which takes land out of farming production and uses that land for planting of grass. Negotiations with the Department of Agriculture for placing 100,000 acres of irrigated land into dryland farming remains the decision of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Senator Taddiken commented that there was no mention of commodities in a presentation he heard while attending the hearings in Washington, D.C. He had to ask specifically about the topic.

Congressman Moran then answered questions from the Committee members.

Congressman Moran said that the U.S.A. meets 60% of the energy needs from unstable countries. There were questions from Committee members regarding CREP, rural economic development, crop insurance, increase in the demand for farm products, and not being able to sell state inspected meat across state lines. The possibility of low interest money for critical access hospitals in rural areas and the necessity of closing county agriculture offices was also of concern to Committee members.

Senator Pine thanked Congressman Moran for supporting the Practicality in Education Act. Congressman Moran expressed some concerns regarding the teacher shortage in Kansas. He recalled the 1996 Outcomes Based Education plan and remembered comments the of losing our best teachers to other professions He also spoke regarding the No Child Left Behind Act.

Congressman Moran said there is an export market for horse meat, particularly France, however a vote of two-thirds majority in the House bans horse slaughter in America.

Chairman Mark Taddikan, thanked the Committee members for their attendance. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 a.m.