

Congressman Jim Kolbe

8th District Arizona

Newsletter

Issue 3 ♦ August 2005



Inside This Issue...

STRENGTHENING OUR SECURITY

Schedule of Townhalls Inside!

The 109th Congress is well underway. We have been working hard to fight the war on terrorism, secure our borders, and strengthen retirement security for all generations. Our work is far from done, and we will continue our efforts to strengthen our security in all aspects of life. Please join me at one of my town hall meetings to discuss securing our borders and nation, securing your retirement, security our economic future, or any issue of concern to you. **Page 1**



Jim pins the Silver Star on Vito Pinello, a World War II Veteran.

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Good news for small businesses! The House has passed legislation allowing small business owners the chance to provide their employees with affordable health insurance. Instead of battling high premiums, small business owners can now band together to form associations, increasing their buying and bargaining power. **Page 3**

Wildfire Update

Arizonans witness the destruction of wildfires each summer. This year, we've already been hit by the Florida fire, which has destroyed more than 23,000 acres of land in the Santa Rita Mountains. In order to maintain a healthy forest, the forest must be managed. That requires long-term involvement of federal, state and local governments. Find out how Congress is working to manage our federal lands and reduce wildfire risk.

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Casework Corner

A group of women in Sierra Vista came to Congressman Kolbe for help when the 600 pound package they sent to the troops in Iraq went missing for months. Find out how Kolbe's office tracked down the package on **Page 2**.

Jim's Mailbag

The House of Representatives first passed the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks on America. The House just reauthorized this legislation - giving law enforcement tools they need to hunt down suspected terrorists. Find out more on **Page 3**.

Legislative Update

Congress spent the month of July working hard to pass responsible spending bills, legislation to benefit Veterans and small businesses, and measures to protect our troops fighting the war on terror. A full summary on **Page 4**.

STRENGTHENING OUR SECURITY

Schedule of Townhalls

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 31 <i>Tucson</i> 2:00-3:30pm Lew Sorenson Center	August 1	2	3	4	5	6 <i>Tucson</i> 10:00-11:30am UA Agricultural Center Audit. <i>Tucson</i> 2:00-3:30pm Catalina Foothills High School
7 <i>Sahuarita</i> 2:00-3:30pm Rancho Resort	8 <i>Sierra Vista</i> MEDICARE Rx PROGRAM 2:00-3:30pm Ethel Berger Center <i>Sierra Vista</i> 7:00-8:30pm City Council Chambers	9 <i>Green Valley</i> MEDICARE Rx PROGRAM 9:30-11:00am West Social Center <i>Oro Valley</i> MEDICARE Rx PROGRAM 2:00-3:30pm Oro Valley Council Chambers	10 <i>Tucson</i> 7:00-8:30pm Northwest YMCA	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 <i>Benson</i> 7:00-8:30pm City Council Chambers	25 <i>Portal</i> 7:00-8:30pm Portal Fire Station	26	27
28	29	30	31			

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CASEWORK CORNER

Better Late Than Never

The Problem: A group of women in Sierra Vista put together a large care package to send to a Marine unit in Iraq in December. One of the women's sons was serving overseas and planned share the contents with the rest of his unit. The nearly 600 pounds of goods left Arizona, but never arrived in Iraq.



Jim presents Tucson resident Tech Sergeant Paul Walker with the Air Force Times "Airman of the Year" Award in Washington, D.C.

For months, the women tried to locate the package, but had no success.

Kolbe Office Solution: The group of women contacted Kolbe's office and asked if he could help track down the missing package. One of Rep. Kolbe's staff members in Washington, D.C. contacted the Army. The Army told the staff member they would try to find the missing package, but their priority was getting bullets and food delivered.

Kolbe's office didn't want to give up and contacted the shipping service to hopefully track down the package. After many phone calls, a company representative was contacted in Bahrain. The representative was able to track the shipment. The package was found in a warehouse in Iraq. On July 7, the Marine unit received its package. Although several months late, the Marines are enjoying food, socks, toothbrushes and most importantly, calling cards.

WILDFIRE UPDATE

Arizonans have to witness the devastation cause by forest fires each summer. In 2002, the Rodeo-Chediski fire burned over 7.2 million acres in northern Arizona. Closer to home, southern Arizonans saw the destruction caused by the Aspen fire on Mt. Lemon in 2003. Most recently, we've seen the Florida fire blaze through the Coronado National Forest threatening nearby communities and the Multi-Mirror telescopes.

The Florida fire, caused by a lightning strike on July 7, was a particularly difficult fire to contain because of the rough terrain and the heavy "fuel loads" (dead trees and dense undergrowth). I commend the Forest Service for its fast response to the blaze, and their tireless efforts to contain the fire and protect people and their property.

In order to maintain a healthy forest, the forest must be managed. That requires long-term involvement of federal, state and local governments. Of critical importance is the need to invest in the management of our federal lands to reduce wildfire risk, including the

restoration of sustainable forests and species control.

I was proud to support the Healthy Forest Restoration Act that the President signed in to law on December 3, 2003. This Act contained provisions to expedite authorized fuel reduction projects on Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands. The law gives priority to the wildland-urban interface, municipal watersheds, and areas affected by insects and diseases. The law also expedites consideration of endangered species and establishes a collaborative process for public involvement.

It is now imperative that many states like Arizona start implementing an infrastructure necessary to execute these projects and avoid further forest fire devastation. During the monsoon season in southern Arizona, we welcome the rain but fear the lightning. I will continue to work with Congress to enact legislation to create a manageable forest system that will help us to easily control and contain future forest fires.

From Jim's Mailbag

Dear Congressman Kolbe,
I'm very concerned regarding what I've been reading about the Patriot Act. It is my understanding that the federal government will have an easier time spying on citizens due to this law. Please tell me how you plan to vote on this issue.

--Bisbee, AZ

I am committed to ensuring the civil liberties of law-abiding Americans are not compromised. At the same time, I am equally committed to ensuring the safety of all Americans from terrorist attack.

Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I voted in favor of this legislation. On October 26, 2001, the President signed it into law. Its purpose is to provide law enforcement with tools to track down terrorists without compromising our core American values and principles of justice and civil liberties.

The USA PATRIOT Act included 16 enhanced surveillance provisions designed to combat terrorism that will expire at the end of 2005 if they are not renewed. Anticipating this expiration, the act underwent extensive hearings in the Judiciary Committee earlier this year. On July 21, 2005, the House of Representatives debated and passed the USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005 (HR 3199) with several amendments. I voted in favor of this bill. The Senate is currently debating its version of the legislation.

HR 3199 makes permanent 14 of the 16 expiring provisions, but retains a "sunset" for the two most contentious provisions – multi-point, or "roving," wiretaps and access to business records – ensuring that Congress will readdress the issue in the future.

The USA PATRIOT Act facilitates information sharing and cooperation among government agencies. The act removes the major legal barriers that prevented the law enforcement, intelligence, and national defense communities from communicating with each other and coordinating their work. It also imposes tough new penalties on those who commit and support terrorist operations, both at home and abroad.

At the same time, the law shields us from abuses of these new police powers by requiring the Department of Justice to review information and receive complaints alleging abuses of civil rights and civil liberties and report any of these abuses to Congress. To date, the Inspector General has verified zero instances of civil liberties abuses of the USA PATRIOT Act. You can access previous reports on the Inspector General's web site at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/igspecr1.htm>. Likewise, my office has yet to receive a specific complaint of an abuse of civil liberties that is a consequence of the USA PATRIOT Act.

Just as important as what the law does is what it does not do. It does not permit detention of individuals or suspend *habeas corpus*. The celebrated cases of Jose Padilla and of the Guantanamo detainees have no connection to the provisions in the USA PATRIOT Act. They are detainees under other provisions of US law or Geneva conventions regarding detention of combatants. The USA PATRIOT Act also does not permit searches without warrants, nor does it allow law enforcement agents to investigate the library records of average Americans who are not suspects in international terrorism or espionage investigations.

It is important to note the USA PATRIOT Act allows investigators to use tools to investigate terrorism that were already available to investigate organized crime and drug trafficking. Many have been used for decades, and have been reviewed and approved by the courts. The difference is that the latter investigates crimes already committed, while the USA PATRIOT Act investigates crimes that are anticipated. That, of course, is the unique nature of counterterrorism.

Americans have always understood that, during times of crisis, we must provide those who defend us with extra tools to accomplish the job. This does not mean sacrificing our civil liberties, but it may mean we suffer inconveniences so that our safety can be ensured. As the Department of Justice implements its mandate, I will be paying close attention to ensure its efforts do not destroy the very freedoms it is meant to protect.

Sincerely,



If you have a question or comment, log onto www.house.gov/kolbe.
Click on the "Contact Jim" link and simply fill out the form with your comments!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The following legislation passed between June 27-July 25.

Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations

On June 30, the House passed a \$67 billion spending bill to fund the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development. The bill provides for an increase in Federal-aid highway funds and addresses critical housing need through an increase in Housing and Urban Development funding.

Water Resources Development Act

On July 14, the House approved legislation authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out various studies, projects, and programs relating to navigation, flood damage reduction, shoreline protection, dam safety, water supply, recreation, and environmental restoration and protection. The bill included language authorizing \$4,987,000 for the Tanque Verde River Project in Tucson. The project, located on the Tanque Verde Creek between Sabino Canyon Road and Craycroft Road, includes flood control bank protection and habitat preservation and mitigation.

Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act

As a cosponsor, Rep. Kolbe supported this veterans legislation that ensures the Department of Veterans Affairs' cash benefits retain their purchasing power and are not eroded by inflation. The measure, which passed the House on July 13, is estimated to provide veterans and survivors \$538 million in additional compensation in 2006.



Military Personnel Financial Services Protection Act

On June 28, the House passed legislation that protects our nation's military personnel from those seeking to take advantage of them financially. The bill creates a registry of banned agents and companies caught selling bad and unnecessary financial products to military personnel using predatory sales tactics, prevents the sales of contractual fund mutual plans to service members, and prohibits payday lenders from threatening to contact a military personnel's commanding officer in an attempt to collect a loan.

Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill

On June 29 the House passed a \$20.27 billion bill which funds foreign assistance programs. The bill provides \$2.7 billion global assistance to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The bill also provides significant increases in security assistance to our allies in the global war on terrorism and increases resources for our anti-narcotic programs abroad.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

On July 12, the House passed four bills benefiting small businesses. The bills are aimed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission by increasing the membership on the Commission and providing flexibility to make exceptions to the 15-day deadline for employers to file responses to citations. The bills also level the playing field for small businesses and encourage OSHA to better assess the merits of a case before bringing unnecessary enforcement action to court.

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Small businesses are vital to southern Arizona. They create jobs, support families, and drive entrepreneurship in our communities. However, compared to larger companies, small businesses often lack something of great importance: health insurance. That is why I have been fighting to increase health insurance coverage for our small business employees.

There are around 45 million uninsured Americans today. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 81 percent of them are either ineligible for their employer's health plan or are employed by businesses that do not offer health insurance at all. That is why I have cosponsored the Small Business Health Fairness Act. This bill would allow more small businesses to offer health insurance by creating Association Health Plans.

AHPs allow trade and industry associations to join together to

offer affordable insurance. They increase the buying and bargaining power that an individual small business would not have by itself. Not surprisingly, when small business owners from southern Arizona talk with me about the issues that are most important to them, AHPs are almost always on their list. To stay competitive, they know they have to find a way to offer their workers affordable health care. AHPs let them do just that, which is why I believe that passing the Small Business Health Fairness Act will provide enormous benefits to Arizonans.

I am happy to inform you that the House of Representatives passed this legislation. I enthusiastically supported its passage for the good of our small businesses, and I hope it will go on to pass the Senate and be signed into law by the President later this year.