

## Oklahoman

### **Giving Oklahomans a Voice on Key Issues**

**September 16, 2009**

**By Rep. Frank Lucas**

On behalf of my constituents, I would like to welcome the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, to Oklahoma.

This visit to Oklahoma is part of the Obama administration's Rural Tour. The President announced in June he would send his Cabinet secretaries across the nation "to hold a series of discussions on how communities, states and the federal government can work together to help strengthen rural America."

I am pleased that El Reno is on the schedule. I am even more pleased that the Agriculture Secretary was selected to make the stop. He will find that Oklahoma is a diverse agricultural state, that rural economies are critical to the success of our country, and that Oklahomans are polite and gracious hosts.

It is good for Secretary Vilsack to continue to gain perspective from those who live beyond Chicago, San Francisco, Hollywood, and Las Vegas. It is good for Secretary Vilsack to hear how fired up those who live and work in the countryside really are about the direction the Obama administration is taking this country.

I am a believer in listening directly to those who live and work in rural America. I recently wrapped up a round of town hall meetings throughout August. The turnout was the largest I have seen during my entire service in Congress, with turnout increasing ten-fold in some communities. During those 18 town hall meetings, my constituents were respectful, but clearly frustrated, angry, and disappointed about the direction of our country.

They are opposed to stimulus packages and bailouts that we cannot afford. They are opposed to the Democrats' national energy tax that will cause fuel and electricity prices to skyrocket and destroy the budgets of households and small businesses. For example, according to recent studies, residents in Oklahoma can expect their electricity rates to increase by nearly \$300 million if the Democrats' national energy tax becomes law.

They are opposed to the federal government running banks, the auto industry, and the health care system. They are opposed to trillion dollar deficits, which as of Friday reached \$1.378 trillion, because deficit spending threatens the long term health of our economy.

The stimulus package undoubtedly funds worthwhile projects, including some in Oklahoma. However, I voted against it because we cannot borrow and spend our way back to a healthy economy. The Obama administration promised the stimulus package

would boost our economy and create jobs immediately. Instead, 2.8 million more Americans have lost their jobs since the stimulus became law.

Simply put, my constituents believe in responsibility, accountability, and fiscal discipline. They have to live within their means; they believe the same practice should apply to their government.

This is the message I believe Secretary Vilsack will hear in El Reno from Oklahomans. I hope he carries this message with him back to Washington and uses it to stand up for rural Americans. I stand willing to work with him in that fight.