



United States Senator

Kent Conrad

North Dakota

Fall 2007

Dear Friends,

This has been a tremendous year in our nation's capital. The 110th Congress has made remarkable progress for both the nation and North Dakota.

In just the past few months, this Congress has been able to address our nation's priorities: provide greater health care for our children, make higher education more affordable for our families, raise the minimum wage, bolster homeland security, increase care for our veterans, and pass a federal budget that cuts taxes and provides for our nation's priorities.

As 2007 winds to a close, I wanted to take a moment to look back at the accomplishments we have been able to achieve specifically for North Dakota. There are also many challenges still confronting us, such as addressing our nation's long-term fiscal imbalance. Be assured, I will continue to work hard for all North Dakotans.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad

United States Senator

Disaster Aid Secured for ND Farmers and Ranchers

It was a long fight, but this spring the U.S. Congress approved an emergency appropriations bill that included a disaster provision authored by Senator Conrad that will bring relief to family farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters.

Senator Conrad said the roughly \$150 million in agricultural disaster assistance will allow many producers who might otherwise be forced off the land to continue to farm. Unlike previous attempts to block disaster assistance, the White House agreed to sign the legislation into law.

“Disaster relief is a big victory for family farmers and ranchers in North Dakota and across the nation,” Senator Conrad said. “The overwhelming support for disaster assistance demonstrates yet again that the U.S. Congress now stands with our nation's farmers and ranchers.”



Senator Kent Conrad meets with residents of Northwood two days after a tornado struck the town. Senator Conrad worked with North Dakota's leaders to secure federal disaster assistance for Northwood families and businesses.

Photo: David Lipp SMSgt. NDANG

Congress Pushes for Funding to Fight Terrorism

The U.S. Senate voted earlier this year to adopt a homeland security bill that will better protect the nation from the threat of future attacks by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

“We know that al-Qaeda leadership is planning to attack the United States. They have done it before and they plan to do it again,” Senator Conrad said. “This is not the time to let our guard down. This bill makes crucial investments in defending our nation’s borders.”

The Senate bill boosts the budget for the Department of Homeland Security, increasing the ranks of first responders, border patrol and aviation security agents. The legislation also funds the construction of additional border fencing, and improves airport screenings to detect explosives.

Delivering Better Health Care to Our Veterans

In an effort to keep our promise to those who have defended our nation, Senator Conrad made funding for veterans’ health care a top priority when writing the nation’s budget for fiscal year 2008. The budget, which was adopted by Congress, boosts veterans’ funding by \$3.5 billion more than the White House’s proposal.

Senator Conrad has placed a special focus on caring for veterans in rural areas and pushed the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to open a series of new VA clinics across North Dakota. The VA responded, opening Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Williston, Dickinson and Jamestown to supplement existing clinics in Bismarck, Minot and Grafton. New clinics will also open in Devils Lake and at Grand Forks Air Force Base.

Leaders from four of America’s veteran’s organizations wrote to Senator Conrad saying, “this budget resolution demonstrates, through action, your commitment to our nation’s sick and disabled veterans and reflects greatly on the moral obligations we have to the men and women who were injured defending our freedom and way of life.”

Decrying the Buildup of Debt

In his recently released memoir, longtime Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan reflects on advice he received from Senator Conrad and former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. In 2001, Senator Conrad warned Greenspan that his endorsement of tax cuts proposed by the White House would add huge amounts of debt and deficit to the nation’s fiscal bottom line.

“It turned out that Conrad and Rubin were right,” Greenspan acknowledges in his book.

Senator Conrad, one of the Senate’s leading deficit hawks, has been among the most vocal opponents of the Administration’s fiscal policies, which have resulted in a ballooning national debt that jeopardizes the nation’s long-term fiscal security.



Veterans and local leaders at the opening of an outpatient clinic in Dickinson.

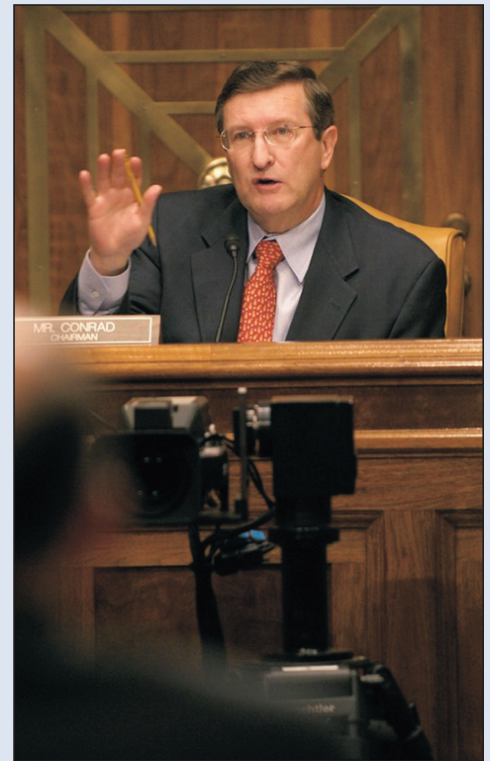
Congress Passes Conrad Budget

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives voted this spring to approve a budget authored by Senator Conrad that provides a fiscally responsible plan for the nation while funding the priorities of the American people.

The approval of a Congressional budget was a notable accomplishment. Congress had failed to adopt a budget in two of the last three years.

“This budget gets our nation’s finances back in order and restores a surplus in five years,” said Senator Conrad. “This budget also upholds our responsibilities as a nation. It bolsters our national defense, restores funding for children’s health care and supports our veterans, including those soldiers returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The Conrad budget plan does not include any tax increase. Instead, it supports tax relief that would benefit middle class families — including extension of the child tax credit, 10 percent bracket, and marriage penalty relief — and provides for estate tax reform. The plan also provides for immediate Alternative Minimum Tax relief, preventing about 20 million middle class taxpayers from being hit by the tax.



Senator Conrad became the Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee in January.

Making Children’s Health a Priority

This summer the U.S. Senate passed sweeping legislation to renew and strengthen the Children’s Health Insurance Program — commonly known as CHIP. The bipartisan legislation supported by Senator Conrad doubles federal funding for North Dakota, where there are more than 14,000 children without insurance to cover the costs of their health care.

Nationally, the legislation renews health care coverage for 6.6 million children currently in CHIP and enrolls an additional 3.2 million more uninsured children.

Boosting Minimum Wage, Aiding Small Businesses

For the first time in more than a decade, Congress passed legislation to increase the minimum wage for American workers. The Minimum Wage Act raises the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 over the next two years.

Also included in the minimum wage hike were key tax cuts and credits authored by Senator Conrad to benefit small businesses and create new jobs. There are more than 60,000 small businesses in North Dakota.

Among Senator Conrad’s tax relief provisions are a 3½-year extension of the work opportunity tax credit, expanding eligibility for that credit to include disabled veterans, and greater flexibility in business expensing, which allows small businesses to fully deduct the costs of purchasing certain equipment in the same year.

Energy Bill Means a Big Boost for North Dakota

The U.S. Senate passed a national energy bill containing many key initiatives from Senator Conrad's BOLD Energy Act. The energy bill helps grow North Dakota's economy by calling for greater production of renewable fuels, many derived from crops grown on North Dakota's family farms.

The bill mandates that ethanol production grow to at least 36 billion gallons annually by 2022. Of that, 21 billion gallons are to be derived from advanced biofuels such as cellulosic ethanol, which can be developed from grasses native to North Dakota.

"This bill encourages the use of domestic sources of energy and will help America look to the farm fields of the Midwest instead of the oil fields of the Mideast," Senator Conrad said.



Senator Conrad meets with scientists at USDA's research laboratory in Mandan. The North Dakota researchers are performing cutting-edge research turning North Dakota's crops into domestic sources of energy.

Senator Kent Conrad's Congressional Report



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