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NEBRASKA ACTIVITIES

My office can help you in a variety of ways on federal issues. If you need assistance or have questions, please contact us using the information below. Here is an overview of some of our work in Nebraska in 2007:

- › Provided assistance with questions or problems regarding federal programs and matters (Social Security, Medicare, Immigration, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and others) to thousands of Nebraskans in the First District
- › Held more than 20 Open Door constituent meetings, in communities from Allen to Beatrice, across the First District
- › Conducted four “telephone townhall” meetings to discuss congressional issues and answer constituent questions
- › Visited First District high schools to speak with students about current events and educational opportunities
- › Organized an educational conference, Local Foods from Local Farms, in conjunction with the University of Nebraska on the benefits of local food production to ag producers, consumers, and local economies
- › Held Medicare forums in communities featuring experts who provided key information to seniors regarding the Prescription Drug Benefit Plan
- › Encouraged the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury to honor Nebraska’s Ponca Chief Standing Bear on the newly authorized “Native American \$1 Coin”
- › Secured funding for important Nebraska projects and the University of Nebraska, involving flood control and environmental protection, alternative energy, transportation, higher education, and military research and construction
- › Helped the Homestead National Monument near Beatrice celebrate the opening of its Heritage Center and sponsored legislation to expand its property
- › Sponsored a House-approved bill to help enhance the future of Nebraska’s own Lewis and Clark Visitor’s Center
- › Helped designate the City of Plattsmouth a “Preserve America Community,” the first such award in Nebraska



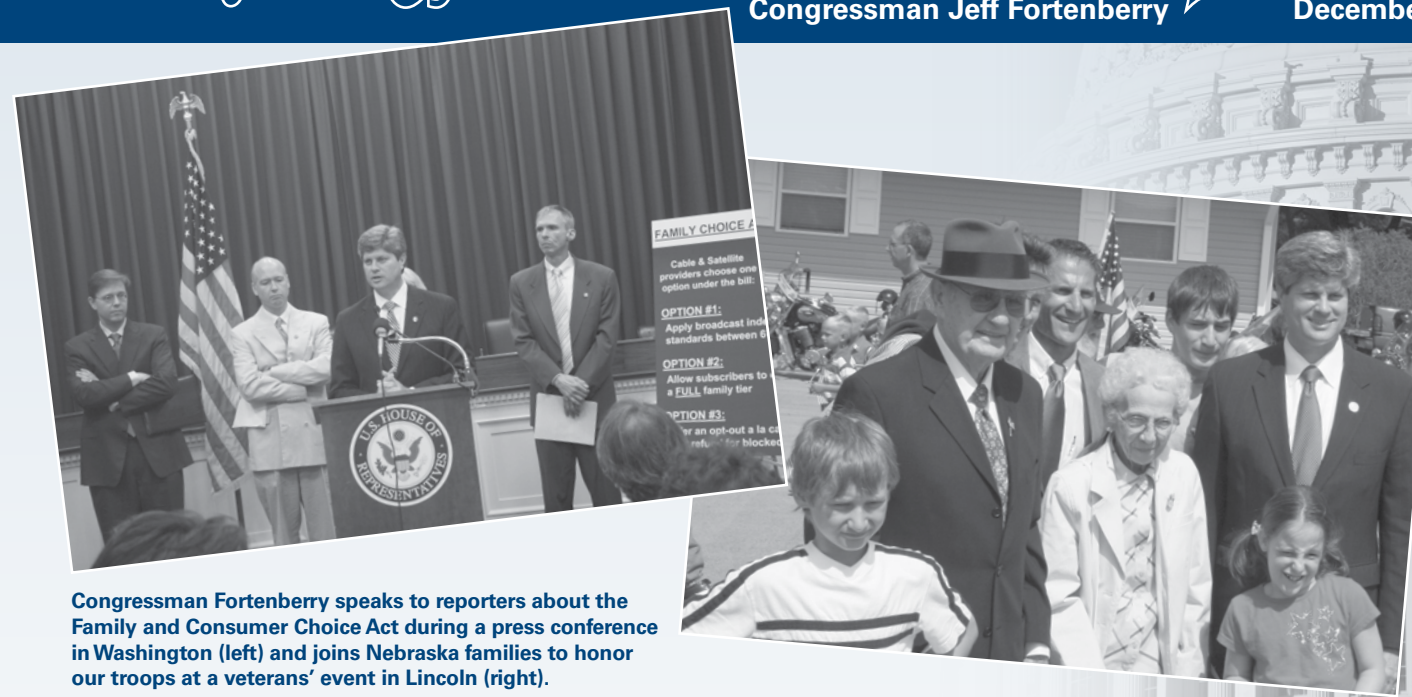
Congressman Fortenberry speaks with a resident of the Green House Project, a home setting for long-term care, at Tabitha Health Care Services in Lincoln (left) and addresses residents of Rising City at the opening of the Rising City Fire Department’s new station (right).



The Year-End Report

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry

December 2007



Congressman Fortenberry speaks to reporters about the Family and Consumer Choice Act during a press conference in Washington (left) and joins Nebraska families to honor our troops at a veterans' event in Lincoln (right).

Dear Friends:

I am honored to represent you in Congress. It is a distinct privilege to work on your behalf for the good of our communities, our state, and our nation. This report is an overview of this year’s work on policies affecting Nebraska and America.

Our country faces many challenges. At home, we strive for a safe environment for families and children, hope and opportunity in the face of uncertainty, and a culture that respects the life and dignity of all persons. Abroad, instability in the Middle East, weapons proliferation in volatile states, and human rights abuses across the world entangle efforts for diplomacy and peace.

Yet the strength of America and the ideals of our founding still hold – liberty, life, and justice – and inspire hope in the spirits of young and old here and throughout the world. For the good of the country, our traditions call for us to lead with strength of conviction and clarity of vision, as did those who have gone before us.

In 2007, my efforts in Congress focused on five important areas: national security and international relations; alternative energy and environmental sustainability; economic opportunity and rural vitality; patient-centered health care, and family life and culture.

Your thoughts and ideas about our progress are important. Please feel free to contact me. I appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

Jeff Fortenberry
Member of Congress

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NEWS IN WASHINGTON

National Security and International Relations

Providing national security is a fundamental duty of the federal government. The foundations of our security lie in a well-equipped U.S. military and controlled, secure borders. Our nation is strengthened as well by maintaining good relationships with other nations, promoting fundamental human rights, and increasing international stability. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, addressing these complex challenges has been a top priority.

Military and Veterans

Our servicemen and women and military veterans swore an oath to protect America. They and their families have sacrificed greatly on our behalf. Congress has an obligation to serve those who have served our country.

In support of policies that will improve the care we provide our military men, women, and veterans, I voted for the *FY 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations*, which has been approved by the House of Representatives. It would provide a 12 percent increase in funding for veterans and military construction.

Earlier in the year, I voted for the *Traumatic Brain Injury Health Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act of 2007* (H.R. 2199), which designates a special program within the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist with the long-term care and rehabilitation needs of those veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries. It also provides research and education support to improve the treatment of veterans with brain injuries.

Additionally, I cosponsored the *Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act* (H.R. 3793). News recently circulated that veterans unable to fulfill their terms of service due to injuries incurred during battle were denied their service bonuses or required to return a portion of them. Military leadership has since confirmed that official policy allows these soldiers to receive their full bonuses, and it has committed to fixing any administrative problems. H.R. 3793, which passed the House, is a legislative safeguard that would require the Department of Defense to pay full bonuses to veterans medically discharged due to combat-related wounds. Veterans injured in battle deserve no less.



Congressman Fortenberry speaks with General David Petraeus regarding his report on the situation in Iraq to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (top) and presents Lt. Col. Paul Adams, a former Tuskegee Airman, with a congressional medal during a ceremony in Lincoln (bottom).

Iraq and the Middle East

While the war in Iraq remains difficult and costly, in recent months we have seen real progress. The new policies implemented by General David Petraeus have resulted in a decline in sectarian violence in Iraq. Iraqi security forces have shown increasing ability to provide security on their own, with half of Iraqi provinces now under their control. These improvements have made possible the gradual start of withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

New options for achieving long-term stability in Iraq must be explored. We now have a window of opportunity to expand our diplomatic efforts by engaging our responsible allies in the Middle East to improve security in Iraq. I raised the idea of a “Diplomatic Surge” when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in October. Secretary Rice noted that responsible nations in the Middle East are beginning to pursue multilateral security institutions to foster stability in the region. To further these efforts, I have introduced legislation that prioritizes our diplomatic work and calls on Iraq’s neighbors to assist in securing the country’s borders and preventing terrorist organizations from destabilizing the region.

As we work to prevent violence, stabilize Iraq, and bring our troops home, our military personnel must have the support needed to succeed. I have repeatedly supported funding for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, ensuring they are equipped with the resources necessary to protect themselves while they work.

NEWS IN WASHINGTON

In August my office hosted an educational conference on local food production in conjunction with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The conference focused on the economic, social, and nutritional benefits of local foods for consumers, farmers, and communities – reconnecting the farm to the family, the urban to the rural communities.

Family Life and Culture

Families and communities that protect the innocence of children, respect life, teach personal responsibility, and encourage decency help build a culture that honors the inherent dignity of every person, including the poor and the defenseless. Our society is strengthened in such a culture, and public policy should reflect its values.

Protecting Children

Americans deserve to know that items on store shelves, particularly imported toys for children, are safe for use. I cosponsored the *Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act*, which passed the House mid-December. This bill would ban lead in children’s products beyond a stringent trace amount, require independent third-party testing for children’s products, and establish mandatory safety standards for nursery products. It also strengthens the Consumer Product Safety Commission. We must ensure that those who want to trade with us meet their obligations and produce safe products.

Help for the Disadvantaged

American farmers produce an abundance of food. Efficiently distributing surplus food resources can help the needy in difficult situations. Again this year, I supported fully funding the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), a USDA program that distributes food to low-

income seniors and women with children. Many Nebraskans rely on this program for basic nutrition needs. I wrote the President requesting that the CSFP be fully funded in his budget proposal.

Life-Saving Research

Good news came recently in the groundbreaking scientific discovery of pluripotent stem cells that can be usefully obtained from normal, adult skin cells. Scientists believe this development will advance potentially life-saving research while avoiding the ethically divisive issue of embryonic stem cell research, which involves the destruction of unborn human life.



In conjunction with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Congressman Fortenberry hosts an educational conference at UNL’s East Campus on the benefits of local foods (top) and speaks with families visiting our nation’s Capitol about issues important to them (bottom).

Recently I supported the funding of a variety of research initiatives to help conquer diseases, such as juvenile diabetes and cancer, which were included in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (H.R. 3043). Federal support for scientific research can make important advances against these diseases, helping improve people’s lives.

Tax Relief for Working Families

This year I cosponsored the *Parents’ Tax Relief Act of 2007*. This legislation will provide sensible tax assistance to hard-working families.

Parents juggling family and work commitments deserve a fairer tax code. *The Parents’ Tax Relief Act* provides multiple benefits for families.

It makes permanent the Child Tax Credit, eliminates the Marriage Penalty Tax, and supports new types of work arrangements. Public policy should respect working families trying to get ahead, not make it more difficult for parents to provide for their children’s wellbeing.

Family and Consumer Choice

In June, I joined Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL) in introducing the *Family and Consumer Choice Act of 2007* (H.R. 2738), legislation designed to make television programming more suitable for family audiences and more flexible for consumers. It would require any cable or satellite provider to do one of the following: limit indecent programming during daylight hours, offer a family tier of programming, or offer an opt-out “a la carte” cable package to customers. Often families are locked into purchasing cable packages that many times provide unsuitable content. Giving Americans more control over their cable programming choices will help families make choices suitable for their children.

NEWS IN WASHINGTON

The *Internet Tax Freedom Amendments Act of 2007* (H.R. 3678), which I supported, also became law. It extends the Internet tax moratorium for another seven years, keeping Internet access tax free until 2014. Thousands of Nebraska small businesses have used the Internet to complement their physical presence. The extension of the moratorium is an important step forward in ensuring that unnecessary taxes and fees do not stifle the benefits of small business entrepreneurship.

We can do more for small businesses by lowering the cost of health insurance. Earlier this year, I cosponsored the *Working Families Wage and Access to Health Care Act* (H.R. 324), which joined a minimum wage increase and tax relief with a proposal to allow small businesses across the nation to band together to provide group health insurance plans for their employees.

Health Care Reform

Our health care system faces serious challenges. The cost of both private and government health insurance is increasing faster than inflation and wages, and the number of uninsured is rising. These challenges can be met with innovative policies that lower costs and increase outcomes while protecting vulnerable persons.

Lower Costs, Greater Flexibility

Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) are an innovative, low-cost solution to our health care crisis. HSAs empower individuals and families to take control of their health care dollars. They also enhance portability, as employees can take their HSAs from one job to the next.

Last year my legislation to expand these accounts' accessibility by permitting the rollover of funds from retirement

plans to HSAs was adopted into law. This year I continued to explore options for the expansion of HSAs.

Children's Health Care

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has helped provide many low-income families with needed health coverage for their children. It is a very important program for many Nebraskans.

This year SCHIP came before Congress for reauthorization, and a proposal to expand the program was discussed at length. An expansion of SCHIP should be done in a responsible manner that provides coverage to needy children. When partisan wrangling



Congressman Fortenberry discusses small business issues with constituents at Bredeaux Pizza in Ashland during a "coffee shop talk" meeting (top) and speaks to high school students at Norfolk's Lutheran High Northeast about current events (bottom).

stalled productive debate on the issue, I introduced the *Children Come First Act of 2007*. It would allow families earning between 200 percent and 300 percent of the federal poverty level to join SCHIP if their children were denied health insurance or if private coverage for their children was unaffordable. The family would have the option of enrolling the child in SCHIP or applying for "premium assistance," a government subsidy, to obtain or continue private coverage. I am hopeful that elements of this measure will be considered as Congress continues to work on a long-term renewal of SCHIP.

Recently Congress extended the current program allowing us the time needed to explore improvements. A solution is necessary to help those for whom the program was intended – poor children without proper health coverage and those families who struggle with affordability.

Research and Education

I voted in favor of the FY 2008 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill on several occasions this year. As with any complicated appropriations legislation, there are some funding provisions within the bill which I would have changed. However, the measure generally moved in the right direction by providing appropriate federal support for key programs – particularly in the areas of health research and education.

Health and Wellness

As a society, we should embrace healthful lifestyle patterns – such as eating wholesome foods and getting regular exercise – that can stave off health care complications and their costs. I continue to advocate policies that encourage public and private entities to promote health and wellness practices among individuals and families.

NEWS IN WASHINGTON

Secure Borders and Legal Immigration

Controlled borders are essential to national security and orderly immigration policy. An effective immigration process has many societal benefits, but it cannot happen with chaos at the border. I have supported successful efforts in the House of Representatives to provide meaningful border security and penalize unscrupulous employers who create an illicit demand for illegal labor. Such efforts have included the authorization of more border patrol agents, increased technology to strengthen border resources, and border fencing between the U.S. and Mexico.

This year I cosponsored the *Secure America through Verification and Enforcement Act* (H.R. 4088), a bipartisan approach to further secure our borders and strengthen immigration enforcement. The SAVE Act increases barrier resources and the number of border patrol agents, strengthens cooperative enforcement efforts in the nation's interior, and requires businesses to verify their employees are here legally.

I also cosponsored legislative measures to prevent states from issuing driver's licenses to illegal aliens. Providing persons who have come here illegally with the benefits of citizenship undermines the rule of law and the notion of civic responsibility.

Many persons, however, seek to come to America legally, and we can provide help in difficult cases. For example, my office learned that many Iraqi translators who had aided America's military in Iraq were being denied applications to immigrate to America. These people face grave danger in their own country by helping America, and they need our help to have a

safe, peaceful future. I introduced legislation earlier in the year to increase the number of special visas for Iraqi translators. My House colleagues passed the legislation, the President signed it, and it became law.

Human Rights

The foundations of liberty and justice lie in the recognition that every person has dignity and rights. Strengthening these principles in nations seeking civil reform is essential. I am privileged to serve on the House Democracy Assistance Commission, which seeks to strengthen emerging democratic institutions by assisting their legislatures. In late May, I joined other members of the commission to



Congressman Fortenberry joins veterans to honor them at a Veterans Day ceremony at West Point-Beemer High School (top) and, along with other Members of Congress on the House Democracy Assistance Commission, discusses the state of affairs in the Middle East with Egyptian officials in Cairo (bottom).

work with key officials and parliamentarians throughout the Middle East and Africa. Pursuing additional diplomatic opportunities, we engaged with leaders such as Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Lebanon's Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, as well as Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first democratically elected woman president in Africa.

While in Liberia, I was introduced to several young men who had been forced to fight in Liberia's civil war as children. The use of child soldiers is one of the most egregious human rights violations of our times. Children belong on playgrounds not battlegrounds. In October, I introduced the *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007* (H.R. 3028) that urges the U.S. Government to take action against foreign governments and paramilitaries that coerce children into combat. This bill later became part of the *William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2007* (H.R. 3887), which recently passed the House.

Religious minorities around the world are often persecuted for their beliefs. The status of religious minorities in Iraq is of particular concern. Lincoln is home to an estimated 500 Yezidis, an Iraqi religious minority group. Although Iraq's constitution guarantees religious freedom, many religious minorities remain targets of sectarian violence. I have called for congressional hearings to highlight and review the plight of Iraq's religious minorities, which includes Christians and several other faith traditions. We must ensure that Iraq is sufficiently prepared to protect such communities from persecution.

NEWS IN WASHINGTON

Lincoln is also home to more than 3,700 Vietnamese Americans, many of them political refugees. The community's leaders have provided valuable insights into the human rights situation in Vietnam.

Last year Congress approved Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with Vietnam, which many hoped would improve human rights practices in Vietnam. While improved trade relations are important to America's economy, potential benefits from enhanced bilateral trade should not supplant legitimate matters of principle involving human rights, the rule of law, and religious freedom. The Vietnamese government has since engaged in an accelerated crackdown on peaceful human rights activists, resulting in more political prisoners.

To address this issue, I have introduced legislation to establish a Congressional-Executive Commission on Vietnam. The commission would collaborate with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to provide an in-depth analysis on human rights in Vietnam.

Energy and Environmental Policy

Nebraska is helping lead America's renewable energy future. With the right vision and smart planning, we can make our state a national model for clean, green energy use and production. Public policy should encourage such efforts by looking to the Midwest, not the Middle East, for America's new energy resources.

Benefits for our State

The *Energy Policy Act of 2005* gave renewable energy an important role in energy policy, spurring a rapid growth of alternative energy production in America. This growth is nowhere more evident than in Nebraska. Today we are America's second largest ethanol producer. Developments in biodiesel, biogas, and wind energy are surging. Smart growth will continue to help increase our energy independence, create new income for farmers, and conserve our natural resources.



Congressman Fortenberry examines the fuel efficiency benefits of hybrid and flex fuel vehicles at an energy demonstration in Washington (left) and joins Nebraska USDA Rural Development Director Scot Blehm to present the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District a check symbolizing USDA rural economic development grants (right).



Bringing Energy and Farm Policy Together

My Rural Energy Self Sufficiency Initiative, which was successfully amended to the House 2007 Farm Bill, would provide assistance for rural towns to establish community-based renewable energy systems. It is important that rural America lead the way to energy independence through clean energy development that is economically and environmentally sustainable.

Creating Clean Energy

I have cosponsored the *Clean and Green Renewable Energy Tax Credit Act of 2007* (H.R. 1596). Among other provisions, it provides a long-term extension of the tax credits for investment in solar energy and qualified fuel cell property through 2030.

The *25 x 25 Renewable Energy Effort* (H. Con. Res. 25) passed the House in October. It calls for 25 percent of America's energy supply to come from agriculture and rural-based renewable energy sources by 2025. I have been a long-time supporter of this effort.

Additionally, Congress passed and the President signed into law the *Energy Independence and Security Act* (H.R. 6), which increases mileage standards (CAFE) and the renewable fuel standard. These policies will help America become less dependent on foreign sources of energy over time and enhance Nebraska's economy with expanded investment in renewable energy resources.

Economic Opportunity and Agricultural Entrepreneurship

Sound economic policy consists of targeted tax relief, fiscal discipline, and the removal of obstacles to entrepreneurship. In Nebraska, our economic strength largely depends on the strength of small businesses and family farms.

My service on the House Agriculture and Small Business Committees is focused on public policies that help create economic opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and entrepreneurs.

Agricultural and Rural Economic Development: The Farm Bill

The Nebraska values of family life, hard work, and personal responsibility are formed most profoundly on the family farm. Good farm policy should help grow new opportunities for farmers while preserving the best of these traditions.

This year the House passed the 2007 Farm Bill (H.R. 2419), which included three of my initiatives for increasing opportunity in rural America. These include the aforementioned new Rural Energy Self-Sufficiency Initiative that would provide grants to rural communities seeking to become energy self-sufficient through the use of renewable sources such as biofuels, biomass, biogas, wind, and solar; an adjustment to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Value-Added Producer Grants Program that would target grant support to small or mid-sized farmers who are developing new uses and creative marketing strategies for their products; and

NEWS IN WASHINGTON



Congressman Fortenberry talks to Howells Fab, Inc., owners about matters involving manufacturing (top) and discusses conservation practices on a family farm near Milford (bottom).

(SBA) and USDA can most effectively be coordinated. The hearing focused on one such effort between SBA and the USDA's Rural Development agency that provides bank lender training on various federal and state loan guarantee programs. This effort has shown early success in Nebraska and could become a model for future efforts across the nation. The hearing also explored ways that SBA and USDA Rural Development can work together to facilitate renewable energy development.

Nebraska is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. It is important that we examine how public policies can work to promote opportunity and entrepreneurship in our rural communities.

Small Business Opportunity

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, driving our economic growth by providing more than 70 percent of new jobs. However, it is not easy for small businesses to succeed.

Access to capital and health care costs are among the most difficult challenges. This year I voted for the *Small Business Investment Expansion Act of 2007* (H.R. 3567) which passed the House. The bill streamlines SBA investment programs and revises rules that inhibit the free flow of investment capital to small businesses. In addition, I introduced legislation (H.R. 126) which would create a loan program permitting individuals to use money in an independent retirement account as capital to start a small business without tax penalty.

Earlier in the year, the *Small Business Tax Relief Act*, which I supported, became law. This legislation provides \$1.3 billion in essential tax savings to small businesses over the next ten years.

an administrative change allowing school systems to give preference to local foods in their school meal programs. The House Farm Bill, although it did not in my view move aggressively enough to cap large farm payments, made progress in the important areas of agricultural entrepreneurship, ag-based renewable energy, and creative conservation. I supported its passage and am hopeful Congress can work together to pass a new Farm Bill soon.

As the ranking member of the Small Business Committee's Subcommittee on Rural and Urban Entrepreneurship, I led a hearing recently to determine how government resources in the Small Business Administration