



BROADBAND SEMINAR HELD IN SOUTH ALABAMA



I was pleased to join Mike Kilgore, executive director of the Alabama Farmers Federation, and Keith Gray, director of national affairs for Alabama Farmers Federation, as Steve Pelham (far left), state director of USDA Rural Development, presented a check for \$578 million, USDA Rural Development's investment in Alabama during 2006.

In partnership with USDA Rural Development, I hosted a broadband awareness seminar in Mobile earlier this month with USDA Rural Development State Director Steve Pelham.

The seminar provided information on the broadband loan program, community connect grants and the distance learning/telemedicine loan and grant program offered through USDA Rural Development. It was designed to provide information on how to help utilize USDA Rural Development to connect you, your business, and even your community to broadband.

Our rural communities cannot be the last in line for resources — they are due much more. Urban, suburban, and rural communities all deserve the same opportunity to stay connected to their families, friends, and the world using new technologies.

I commend those who attended the event, and if you are interested in learning more about the broadband loan programs USDA Rural Development offers, you can visit their website <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/>.

CHRISTMAS TREES ELIGIBLE FOR HURRICANE ASSISTANCE



Christmas tree producers in certain counties of Alabama, including all six counties of the 1st District, may now be eligible for assistance under USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) 2005 Hurricanes Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

Christmas trees had been excluded from TAP because they did not meet the requirement of being a tree that produces an annual crop.

Work by the Alabama Farmers Federation, the Southern Christmas Tree Association, and the Alabama FSA helped address the concerns of these growers and have them included in TAP. Their inclusion will help them recover some of their tremendous losses associated with the hurricanes of 2005.

For more information on eligibility requirements, contact your local FSA office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

A Field Guide for Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests

The USDA Forest Service has released "Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests: A Field Guide for Identification and Control."

The guide provides information on identification and control strategies for plants that are currently invading the forests of 13 southern states.

To view the guide, you can visit the website http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/gtr/gtr_srs062/. To request a printed copy, call 828-257-4830 and ask for GTR-SRS-62 or email pubrequests@srs.fs.usda.gov.

Copies can be requested by mail from:
 Southern Research Station Publications
 200 W.T. Weaver Boulevard
 Post Office Box 2680
 Asheville, NC 28802

APRIL RECESS PACKED WITH VISITS THROUGHOUT SOUTH ALABAMA

While Congress adjourned for Easter and Passover, I spent the time in south Alabama. I held several town meetings throughout the district, including a joint town meeting with Congressman Artur Davis (D-AL) in Thomasville on the campus of Alabama Southern Community College. I also held a meeting in Leroy, one at the Poarch Creek Indian Reservation in Atmore, and one with Congressman Jeff Miller (R-FL) in Perdido Key where we discussed coastal issues.

During this week, we visited with students across the district and had the opportunity to go to several schools, including Satsuma High School, Washington County Elementary School, Washington County Area Vocational Center, Baldwin County High School, and Foley High School.

Additionally, state school board member Randy McKinney and I invited Dr. Joseph Morton, Alabama State Superintendent of Education, and his staff to the First District to meet with local school board superintendents to hear first hand some of the challenges, as well as success stories, of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

As you may know, the NCLB Act is scheduled for reauthorization this year. In hosting this meeting, our hope was to gain a better understanding of how NCLB has affected our schools, teachers, and most importantly, the students.

Dr. Morton and his team listened to the thoughts and concerns of our local educators, and in return, he is compiling



I held my 151st town meeting in Washington County at the Leroy Volunteer Fire Department.



The April recess offered me the opportunity to visit several schools throughout the district. While I was in Chatom, I visited with students and teachers at Washington County Elementary School.

information to present to the Alabama Congressional Delegation so that we may ensure the needs of Alabama are addressed by Congress as we reexamine the NCLB Act.



During the April recess, I also had the chance to go to Escambia County. I visited with Danny Cottrell and his talented staff at Medical Center Pharmacy in Brewton.

Alabama is extremely fortunate to have a leader and education advocate such as Dr. Morton, and I feel confident, as we all should, that Alabama is going in the right direction due to his, and his staff's, hard work and dedi-

cation to the students and educators in Alabama.

From the mailbox...

Dear Congressman Bonner,

Please accept my family's deepest appreciation for the assistance we received from you and your local office, especially Mrs. Brooks Chew.

Without the help of your dedicated staff, we would have likely been permanently buried in the maze of Veterans Administration (VA) red tape.

After months of my brother and me trying to get burial and survivor benefits for our mother, we were becoming completely frustrated with the VA... I relayed our saga to Brooks, and she said she would check into our situation. She and I exchanged many faxes and telephone calls over the next two months, and the situation almost became comical at times... Without Brooks' help we would still be fighting the system. We finally

received a check for past due benefits last week. We hope this is an indication monthly payments have been implemented. We also appreciate you all keeping us regularly apprised of the status of our claims. We are very fortunate to have a congressman and staff that still believe that government is of the people, for the people, and by the people. Thank you all for your service to the citizens of the United States.

Again, let me express our gratitude for the superb assistance you and your staff provided us, and I am more than happy to share that experience with the citizens of south Alabama.

Sincerely,

A satisfied constituent from Mobile

