

April to May 2016

# CONGRESSWOMAN TERRI SEWELL

REPRESENTING ALABAMA'S 7TH DISTRICT

Friends,

It is an honor to serve you in Congress! One of the most important responsibilities I have as your Representative is to update you on the work we are doing on your behalf. This newsletter serves as an update on the progress we have made both in Washington, D.C. and in Alabama's 7th Congressional District during the first quarter of this year.

For more information on recent developments in our office, please visit our website at <http://sewell.house.gov/>.

Sincerely,



## Guide to Grants Seminar held in Tuscaloosa

On Thursday, May 19th and Friday May 20th the annual Guides to Grants seminar was held on the Shelton State Community College Campus in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

As the representative of the 7th district of Alabama, it is part of my job to assist my constituents in finding ways to get funding through grants. Grant opportunities are key to helping communities, schools, non-profits and other organizations in our district grow and reach their maximum potential.

At the workshop, attendees were taught the basics of grants and grant writing. We were able to provide them with valuable information and networking opportunities. We will continue to make sure the people in Alabama have access to such critical information.



## Congressional Voting Rights Caucus Launches

On May 23 I was honored to stand with fellow congressmen Marc Veasey (TX-33), Bobby Scott (VA-3), and other Members to launch the Congressional Voting Rights Caucus. We, together, will stand strong against voter suppression nationwide. The caucus was enacted as a response to the 2013 Supreme Court decision *Shelby v. Holder*. Acts of voter suppression have been rampant since the decision. Evidence shows that these acts disproportionately affect low-income populations and communities of color. The Caucus will help inform our constituents about voting rights, push for legislation that will fight future acts of suppression, and restore the Voting Rights Act 1965.



## District Arts Competition



Each spring, the Congressional Institute sponsors a nationwide high school visual art competition to recognize and encourage artistic talent in the nation and in each congressional district. This year's winner from Alabama's 7th district is Manida Vang of Gordo High School. Her amazing artwork will hang in the Capitol for a full year.

## Constituent Success Story

A constituent contacted our Selma district office in March 2016 regarding an issue with his 2014 Tax Return. He indicated that his tax preparer completed and submitted his Tax Return February 2015, with a refund expected of \$8,263.00. Within a couple of months no refund was received; his tax preparer stated the Tax Return was submitted and not rejected; directing him to contact the IRS. The constituent made several calls to the IRS; an was notified that his Tax Return was pending. Our office contacted the Congressional Liaison with the Taxpayer Advocate Service and discovered his Return was selected for income verification (large refunds are sometimes selected). Taxpayer Advocate Service representative stated that when refunds are selected for verification, it's the taxpayers responsibility to contact the IRS to initiate further action. The Congressional liaison submitted the Tax Return to IRS Integrity Verification Unit for review of information and processing (if information is verified). Our constituent was able to receive his refund on April 23rd.

## EPA Grants



On May 20, 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the selection of the Cities of Birmingham and Tarrant, AL, as recipients of its 2016 Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup (ARC) Grant. The City of Birmingham will receive a \$400,000 community-wide assessment grant, and the City of Tarrant will receive a \$200,000 clean up grant

for the Tarrant Industrial Complex.

According to the EPA, the ARC grants benefit local residents impacted by brownfield sites in their communities by providing "grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes, and other stakeholders, giving them the resources they need to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields."

The announcement followed an earlier announcement in May that Lawson State Community College was one of 18 national awardees and the only recipient in EPA Region 4, to receive the Brownfields Workforce Development Grant

Congresswoman Sewell noted that, "This is outstanding news for the Cities of Birmingham and Tarrant. These funds will allow communities that have struggled with hazardous substances from industrial complexes, to address contamination of their soil and groundwater and provide needed remediation. As we have seen with Flint, Michigan, older, former industrial cities often bear the burdens of their past long after companies have moved on.

The grant award for Lawson State is particularly exciting given it will provide needed job skills and certifications for local students to work in communities and address environmental remediation of contamination. This grant reflects the extraordinary outcomes possible when our stellar two-year colleges work in partnership with entities like the EPA to help transform communities."

## Bipartisan Rural Healthcare Bill Introduced

On April 29th I joined Rep. Cresent Hardy (NV-04) in introducing H.R. 5133, the bipartisan Rural Hospital Enhancement and Long Term Health (HEALTH) Act of 2016. The bill is designed to reauthorize the State Office of Rural Health program, adjust the USDA Community Facilities Grant Program to increase the maximum grant award for hospitals, and direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to submit an annual report to Congress on the state of our nation's rural health service. It is vital that we combat the growing fragility of rural hospitals to make sure that our communities have access to high quality healthcare. More than 71 rural hospitals have closed since the start of the new decade and congress must do more to ensure that the health of all our citizens is a top priority. I will continue to do all I can to ensure that progress is made.

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It is an honor to serve the 7<sup>th</sup> District in Congress. I'll be back in touch again soon!

