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U.S. Senator Jerry Moran talks to Jan and Billie Proctor at Monday's meeting of the Noon Lions Club at Seward County Community College. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Coming from western Kansas, U.S. Senator Jerry Moran has spent his political life trying to represent the values of rural America to a group of people who come mostly from urban areas.

This can be a difficult process, and the senator talked about some of those challenges at

Monday's Noon Lions Club meeting at Seward County Community College.

As he opened his talk, though, he first gave thanks to veterans for making it possible for people such as himself and Kansas 125th District Representative Reid Petty to do what they do.

"The opportunity that Reid and I have, Reid to work in Topeka and me to work on your behalf in Washington D.C., is because of the sacrifice and service that you all have made to our country, and I honor and esteem you and just hold you all in high regard," Moran said. "There's no group of people I hold in greater respect than our veterans, with one exception – veterans who work to serve other veterans. I'm very grateful that you do that."



Moran said being from the Sunflower State gives him a unique prospective on the nation's politics.

"My interest in politics started out as a belief that we live our lives in Kansas and rural America in a special way," he said. "It means we spend a lot of time and effort paying attention to agriculture, to farmers and ranchers. Their success matters to us."

Moran explained the drastic effects decisions made in the nation's capital can have on rural America.

"In regard to health care, whether or not Medicare pays for the services in an adequate way often determines whether or not we have hospital doors that remain open," he said.

Moran said small business is likewise a big concern in smaller communities such as many in Kansas.

“I’ve often told people in Washington D.C. that where I come from, economic development can be whether or not there’s a grocery store in town,” he said. “Almost no one in Washington D.C. understands how that could ever be an issue. It’s something they don’t have to think about, but in so many of our communities across Kansas, it’s a hardware store, a grocery store, a pharmacy, how to keep Main Street alive and well. These issues are not ones that are going to be resolved in Washington D.C.”

Moran then said other recent decisions made at the federal level could keep Kansas from being better linked with everyone else.

“The Federal Communications Commission last year issued a new order that is very damaging to the chance that we’re going to have fiber optics and telecommunications in rural America,” he said. “We spend a lot of time reversing those bad decisions to give us a shot at being connected with the rest of the world.”

Moran said without some reshaping in Congress and other federal offices, small towns’ destinies could be a little dim.

“The reality is in the absence of a change of direction in Washington D.C., our ability in rural America to remain viable, to have a future is diminished as well,” he said. “In so many ways, the broad issues that we face, the deficit, the debt, spending and revenues have a huge consequence upon the future of our country.”

Moran gave examples of how, because of the mandates of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, employees working at one warehouse had cut back their hours to less than 30 while at the same time working less than 30 hours at another warehouse.

“The creativity of the American entrepreneur, the business person is out there, but government once again is in the way,” he said.

Moran wrapped up his speech by talking about an essential component of any economy – transportation.

“When you’re out here in the middle of where we are, our ability to get manufactured goods and agriculture commodities to market in an efficient way, highway systems, airports and railroads are pretty darn important if we’re going to compete in a global economy,” he said.

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