



## Boozman Bulletin: This Week in the Senate

The Senate confirmed Tom Vilsack to serve as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Secretary Vilsack has a track record of working with Congress, and the strong bipartisan vote expresses the Senate's confidence that he will continue that approach moving forward. Congress and the administration must work together to address the many pressing matters facing the ag community and rural America, particularly the need to provide swift relief to those affected by the ongoing pandemic. Building a good relationship with Secretary Vilsack will help us achieve our mutual goals while ensuring that the needs of farmers and ranchers are always at the forefront of USDA's agenda. I [spoke on the Senate floor](#) in support of Secretary Vilsack's confirmation.



I'm proud to [serve as the top Republican](#) on the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry this Congress. The committee has a well-deserved reputation as being among the most bipartisan on Capitol Hill. It is a place where committee members actually sit down around a table, hash out our differences and create policy that is good for American agriculture. I am confident this trend will continue as Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and I work together to address the many challenges our agricultural producers face. My focus will be on efforts to address the impact of the pandemic, grow the farm economy, modernize important nutrition programs and expand opportunities

across rural America. [Read what Arkansans have to say](#) about what my new role means to our state's ag community.

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## **Follow Arkansas's Lead & Reopen Schools**

The Natural State can be proud of the teachers, administrators and elected leaders who continue finding ways to keep schools open and providing critical services children need. It's time that students in other states have the same opportunities. In a [speech on the Senate floor](#), I explained how Arkansas educators thought creatively and used federal COVID-19 relief aid to invest in cleaning supplies, barriers and retrofitted classrooms. Communities across the state faced different challenges, but Arkansas schools united under one goal: finding the best and safest way to get and keep children and teachers in the classroom.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [research recommends schools reopen](#). Earlier this month, the CDC issued new guidance to help schools safely open for in-person learning. While President Joe Biden pledged to reopen schools within his first 100 days in office, the administration is now backing away from the original goal. Getting students back in the classroom must be a priority.

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## **Protecting Health Care Workers from Discrimination**

This week I helped reintroduce the [Conscience Protection Act](#) to protect health care providers, including health insurance plans, from government discrimination if they decline to participate in abortions. The legislation also provides a private right of action for victims of discrimination.

Our conscience rights are one of the most fundamental aspects in our society and democracy. Protecting the ability of health care workers to decline to violate their own deeply-held religious beliefs and convictions is absolutely necessary. I'm proud to join my colleagues in introducing this legislation that safeguards that option and provides opportunities for those discriminated against to receive their due process, including private legal action.

I will continue to advocate for policies that protect religious liberties and support legislation that promotes the value of life.

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## **Celebrating Black History Month**

February is Black History Month—a time to reflect on the influence of African Americans in our history and celebrate their achievements and contributions to the fabric of our nation. We commemorate the heroes of the African American community who fought injustice and triumphed in the face of adversity.

We honor individuals like the 16 Arkansans who served in the historic [6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion](#), the first and only all-female, all-black battalion to be deployed overseas during WWII. The Women's Army Corps launched the Six Triple Eight in November 1944 with more than 850 personnel assigned to sort the logjam of mail in the European Theater. We should all be inspired by the courage, determination and

willingness of these women to serve our country, and in a uniquely special and necessary role. This week I cosponsored legislation to award the unit the Congressional Gold Medal. Such recognition would be a fitting tribute to commemorate the legacy of these trailblazing Americans and the role they played in our history.



We continue to honor those who served their country in uniform. In the ‘Salute to Veterans’ series that honors Arkansas veterans, we featured the late [Benjamin Haymon](#), a WWII veteran who served in the Pacific Theater. At the age of 31, he was considerably older than many of his brothers in arms when he was drafted in 1941. When Mr. Haymon passed away in 2019, he was the oldest known WWII veteran in our state.

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## Constituent Corner

My staff and I remain committed to doing all we can to help during these challenging times. While some federal agencies are struggling to meet the changing demands of their services during the pandemic, we continue to get answers for Arkansans.





I am pleased my office was able to help Marecia navigate the Social Security process when she was having trouble getting updates on the status of her claim. The COVID-19 emergency has made communicating with many government agencies more difficult and I am happy we could help her bridge the gap. [Let us help you.](#)

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## Connecting on Social Media

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