

Courier-Journal.com

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

BUCKNER

McConnell visits community center
Senator talks about Iraq and term limits

By Andrea Uhde

auhde@courier-journal.com

The Courier-Journal

Linda Lawson left the John W. Black Community Center in Buckner last week with a wide smile after posing for a picture with her family and U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell.



The Oldham County Chamber of Commerce organized U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell's visit, and about 100 people gathered to listen. (By Michael Hayman, The Courier-Journal)

Hearing McConnell's speech -- which touched on the war, immigration and trade -- "was very interesting," said Lawson, of La Grange. "It was good to hear from someone who knows a lot more about it (the Iraq war) than I do."

She was among about 100 people who gathered at the community center to munch on chicken salad and croissants and listen to McConnell discuss several timely topics. The Oldham County Chamber of Commerce organized the event.

On the war, McConnell said, many people oppose it partially because there's a perception of little progress.

"There's no question that the public has turned against the war," acknowledged McConnell, a Republican in his fourth term representing Kentucky. He said he's irritated that the Iraqi government still hasn't done everything it said it would do.

"I think everyone can understand the frustration of the public," he said.

McConnell said the United States hasn't been attacked in nearly six years -- since Sept. 11, 2001 -- and its offense is a principal reason why.

It's important to keep troops stationed overseas, he added. "The worst thing we can do is take everyone out, bring them back home and leave a huge vacuum to be filled by our enemies."

As McConnell spoke, protesters at the entrance to the community center held signs demanding "Bring Our Troops Home" and other slogans, hoping McConnell would get a glimpse and realize "he's out of touch with his constituency," said Patrick King from Shelby County.

"We don't have any hopes we're going to speak to him, but we're giving him the message here," King said, tapping on his sign which read: "Keep 'em safe" and "Bring 'em home."

McConnell said he's seen such protests before -- even at his home.

"This is a free country and everybody has a right to express themselves," he said.

After he spoke, McConnell took questions from the crowd. One man asked if he expected legislation addressing term limits.

"I don't know, but I'm not in favor of it and never have been," he said as the group erupted in laughs. "We have term limits in this country. They're called elections."

Sharon Lott, who works at Farm Credit Services in Shelbyville, said McConnell made some good points during his speech, though she had hoped for more details.

"He has strong ties to agriculture and making sure he does the best he can do for our local farmers," she said.

Reporter Andrea Uhde can be reached at (502) 582-4663.