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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - January 1, 2016

JANUARY 01ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - January 1, 2016

A Week to Remember

With record rainfall and historic water levels on the Mississippi and surrounding rivers, we closed 2015 with the very real and scary reminder of the power of mother nature.

When Christmas approached, constant rainfall and a quickly rising Mississippi River replaced holiday cheer and laughter amongst friends and family with concerns for safety and well-being of those same individuals we love. A relentless rain left many worried about the potential for historic river crests and topping of levee systems stretching across hundreds of miles of the Mississippi River. The levee system in southeast Missouri and the hard work of the people who serve on our levee and drainage districts are integral in protecting homes, businesses and hundreds of thousands of acres of farm land along the Mississippi River.

On Monday, I rode the Bois Brule Levee near McBride in eastern Perry County to survey the rising river. That levee alone protects 16 houses, numerous businesses and 26,000 acres of farm land. From there I attended a public meeting in St Genevieve to discuss rising waters and safety concerns. There, city officials asked residents to move belongings and prepare as though an evacuation would be needed.

I spent Wednesday with the Army Corps of Engineers, county officials and emergency personnel down in the Bootheel touring the Birds Point & Commerce Levees and the 1500 foot New Madrid gap. We also stopped in Van Buren to speak with emergency officials about the status of the Current River that was rising quickly and threatening a

portion of the town. I stressed with the Army Corps the importance of participating in a public meeting so that residents could hear from them directly about the status of the river and levees and so that they could hear from those same folks about any questions or concerns they have. I was glad the Army Corps agreed and we were able to organize this important meeting on Thursday at the Clara Drinkwater Library in Charleston.

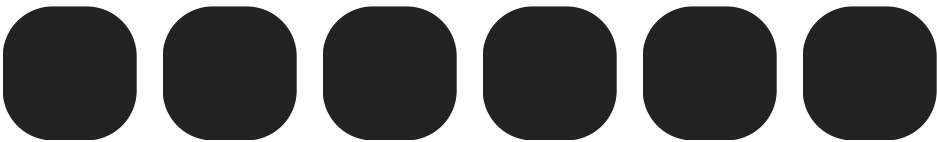
When river levels rise, safety should and will always remain the number one concern. I also want to make sure everything is being done by the Army Corps to protect the very businesses and farmland in the floodways which support thousands of families throughout southeast Missouri and the homes they live in.

Christmas teaches us about the birth of Christ and the spirit of giving, compassion, and kindheartedness. This Christmas, beyond just giving gifts we learned those lessons in a very real way. I saw firsthand those values in the hundreds of county officials, levee board officers, emergency personnel, volunteers and residents I met with along the Mississippi River. Watching students over their Christmas break sandbag to protect their communities is something I will never forget and I am grateful for the honor to represent such people before the U.S. Congress. There is nowhere else on earth you can find such hardworking and genuine people who truly represent the meaning of Christmas.

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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - January 1, 2016

JANUARY 01ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - January 1, 2016

A Farewell to 2015

In what seems like the blink of an eye, 2015 came and went and along the way carried with it both dramatic highs and devastating lows. The year started with a legislative session with an ambitious agenda that the General Assembly worked hard to complete. Major successes included medical malpractice reforms to keep the costs of health care in check; reforms to the state's system of welfare to give Missourians in need an incentive to get back to work; and a fix to the state's unemployment system meant to ensure benefits are available to the jobless while also protecting business owners from excessive taxes and fees. The legislature also came together to pass landmark municipal court reform legislation meant to crack down on the predatory practices some municipalities have used to raise revenue through excessive traffic tickets.

Sadly, the accomplishments of the General Assembly were overshadowed by several tragic events that sent shockwaves not just through the Capitol, but through the state and nation as well. It was in late February when legislators were devastated by the news that State Auditor Tom Schweich had taken his own life. Members immediately gathered for a prayer service in the House Chamber as they tried to cope and support one another during such an emotionally trying time. The anguish was amplified just a few weeks later when one of Schweich's key staffers made the decision to take his own life as well. Again, members were reminded that all life is precious but fragile, and that the political pressure cooker can sometimes drive individuals to make decisions with tragic consequences.

Outside the state of Missouri, the year produced several difficult moments that left Americans and many around the globe in tears. Terrorist attacks in Paris – both at the beginning of the year and again in November – resulted in an enormous loss of life, and reminded the world that the forces of terror remain a significant threat. Within the borders of the United States, mass shootings in Charleston, South Carolina; Roseburg, Oregon; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and San Bernardino, California shook the nation to its core as far too many innocent lives were taken. Missouri and the rest of the nation also dealt with the fallout from global events as the White House initiated a plan to allow 10,000 Syrian refugees into the country. Missouri and many other states continue to fight efforts to relocate refugees within their borders until the federal government can ensure none of the immigrants pose a security risk.

The year 2015 also produced unexpected changes in leadership in both the Missouri House and Senate. On the House side, Floor Leader Todd Richardson took over as House Speaker after the former Speaker resigned due to an inappropriate relationship with an intern. On the Senate side, Floor Leader Ron Richard ascended to the top position after President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey vacated his seat to seek employment outside the building. As 2016 is set to begin, members from both chambers have rallied to support their new leaders and are set to work together to advance an aggressive legislative agenda that will move Missouri toward a brighter tomorrow.

2015 Comes to a Close with Dangerous Flooding

Rather than a white Christmas, Missourians saw the holiday season produce record levels of rainfall that led to flooding throughout the state. Already the overflowing rivers and streams have taken the lives of 13 Missourians and have led to hundreds more being evacuated. The heavy rains and flooding led Governor Nixon to declare a state of emergency, and to activate the National Guard to support Missouri communities and assist first responders.

Fortunately, the forecast now calls for no heavy rain in the next several days, which should allow the flood waters to recede. However, officials continue to warn all Missourians to continue to use extreme caution when encountering water-covered roads.

The governor urged residents of flood-affected areas of Missouri to pay close attention to weather warnings and follow the safety instructions of local officials as the potential for additional dangerous flooding continues. Missourians, especially motorists, are encouraged to remember these important safety tips on flooding and high water:

Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away. Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling.

A foot of water will float many vehicles. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles, including sport utility vehicles and pick-ups. Even if the water appears shallow enough to cross, don't try it. Water hides dips in the road. Worse yet, there may be no road at all under the water. Flooding can scour away the entire road surface and a significant amount of ground beneath.

Missourians who need disaster information, shelter information, and referrals are urged to call 211. The 211 service is now available throughout Missouri.

Congressman Jason Smith had arranged a community town hall meeting with the Corps of Engineers on the afternoon of the 31st. State Senator Doug Libla, State Representatives Holly Rehder and Don Rone as well as myself attended this meeting. In attendance there were also many other local community leaders present. The Corp, per their statements at this meeting, do not feel they will be activating the floodway at the current flood stages and predictions. I will

continue to monitor this situation closely, if you have any issues with the flooding, please do not hesitate to contact my office, if we cannot provide the assistance we will find who can!

Legislature Set to Look at Real ID Issue

The State of Missouri recently was notified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that driver's licenses issued in Missouri will not be considered valid forms of identification by federal facilities. The notification has set leaders in both the House and Senate into motion to develop a compromise or fix that will ensure Missourians do not have issues in the future with boarding an airplane. For now, the federal government's decision to not recognize Missouri driver's licenses will only prevent license holders from using that ID to enter a federal facility such as a military base. However, both House Speaker Richardson and Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard have said they want to act quickly to develop a solution that will protect Missourians from any inconvenience or loss of access or services.

It was in 2009 that Missouri passed legislation to prevent changes proposed by the federal Real ID Program. Specifically, the bill prohibits the state revenue department from changing the procedures for applying for a driver's license to comply with the federal act. Real ID was approved by Congress in 2005 in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The goal was to create minimum standards for government-issued identification. However, several states joined Missouri in rejecting what they saw as an attempt to create a national identification card.

Now, lawmakers will look for a compromise solution that will honor the spirit of the 2009 law, but also ensure Missourians don't have to face additional hurdles when traveling.

Until Next Week,

Tila

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report: Protecting Farm & Family - Thursday, December 24, 2015

DECEMBER 26TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report: Protecting Farm & Family - Thursday, December 24, 2015

Washington D.C. - 8th Congressional District - This past week Congress completed its legislative work for the calendar year. While much of what was jammed through Congress in the 11th hour represented more of the same in Washington; there was one piece of legislation which will provide large scale tax relief to American families, farmers and business owners, which I was proud to support, the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act.

As a Member of the Ways & Means Committee, the Committee with jurisdiction over all federal taxation issues, I helped author one provision in particular – making **permanent** section 179 expensing levels. Section 179 of the U.S. Tax Code allows small businesses, farmers, and small manufacturers to immediately expense the purchase of certain equipment. Had we not taken action, come January 1st, the tax rate on that equipment would have increased by almost 2000%!

Since 2003, section 179 expensing levels have been extended on a temporary, uncertain, ad-hoc basis on ten different occasions – usually for one or two years at best. That type of tax code policy does nothing to allow farmers and business owners to plan for the future. Without certainty on what their tax rates, folks can't manage their farm or business properly nor know how much they will have to expand, invest and grow their operation. The more certainty congress can provide about long term tax rates, the more farmers and businesses can help our economy and create new jobs.

This is a major step to give farmers more peace of mind for the long term while also providing for a major reduction in taxes. Without this action, taxes would have gone up on the very farmers that keep our rural economy moving. Making this provision permanent finally ends the charade of temporary extensions and patches of U.S. tax code policy. Working on and advancing major wins like this for the farmers of Missouri was the exact reason I fought to get on the Ways & Means Committee. We are finally allowing farmers, manufactures and small business owners to plan financially for the long term so they can help grow their farm or business here in America.

Additionally, permanently extending section 179 helps provide the framework and path forward for large scale U.S. tax code overhaul in 2016 and 2017. As a Member of the House Ways & Means Committee, I have been focused on reducing the complex and cumbersome tax code facing families and employers. Simply put, we need to replace our current 75,000 page tax code with a simpler, fairer and flatter system, one which helps rural families and farmers, while getting the IRS out of their lives.

We should be looking for ways to help our farmers and families, not make running a farm or family more difficult. By providing this permanent tax relief we finally took a step in that direction. There is no better way to grow our economy than establishing a less burdensome and less costly tax code, which allows you to keep more of your hard earned money. As your voice in Washington I will continue to advocate for needed relief from unnecessary regulations, out of control spending, and a punitive tax code.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, December 18, 2015

DECEMBER 22ND 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, December 18, 2015

Dear Friend,

This week, without my support, Congress voted to fund the government for another year. The 2,009-page bill negotiated behind closed doors was a bad deal for rural America and a bad deal for southeast and southcentral Missouri. Simply put, this legislation funded more priorities for the president, than for the folks back home.

The funding bill fell short in efforts to rein in the out of control EPA and to defund job killing regulations done by presidential order. Not reducing EPA funding by even \$1 is simply unacceptable. The refusal to include efforts to defund the catastrophic Waters of the U.S. regulation, the President's new Power Plan, Ambient Air Quality regulations or new Washington rules on wood burning stoves are just some examples of concern. The EPA's disastrous combination of new rules and regulations place extreme burdens on Missouri families and job creators. These rules are simply going to force businesses to shut down and Congress should be using the power of the purse to fight back.

The EPA's proposed Waters of the United States rule could allow the EPA to regulate nearly every area of the ground that gets wet or has flow during rainfall. The new Presidential Power Plan sets new untested coal standards, drastically increasing the cost of power for the main source used to keep the lights on across Missouri. In our state, 83 percent of our energy comes from coal power. The EPA's new National Ambient Air Quality Standards is a regulation The Center for Regulatory Solutions is calling the most expensive regulation in U.S. history. Unfortunately with this government funding bill we

missed an opportunity to address any of these new Washington regulations.

There is no doubt this legislation included both good and bad components - but in my judgement the bad trumped the good. I appreciated efforts within the legislation to repeal costly COOL requirements important to our nation's farmers and reforms made to our Visa Waiver Program, but I was hopeful for the inclusion of stronger pro-life language. Of additional alarm, there was a failure to include important provisions previously passed by the House which provided greater security to the residents of Missouri by certifying that proper screening is taking place before any new refugees are allowed into this country. Rather than waiting years for the courts to decide whether or not the president can grant national amnesty with the stroke of a pen, we should be using the fact that Congress appropriates all federal funding to put an end to those efforts right now.

Congress must use the power of the purse to reflect the priorities of the people. I voted 'NO' because this bill represented more business as usual in Washington - it did not live up to promises I have made to you of greater transparency, pushing back against a regulation happy White House and advancing priorities important to those back home.

Sincerely,

Jason Smith
Member of Congress

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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, December 18, 2015

DECEMBER 19TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, December 18, 2015

Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday Season

In a few days families will gather together to celebrate the birth of Christ. With the ones we care about most, we will share our love and exchange gifts as a way of reminding one another of how much we care and how deeply blessed we truly are. I hope you and your family will have a Merry Christmas filled with love and warmth. I also hope you will not overlook the real reason for the season; something that is too often lost amidst the hustle and bustle of shopping and other Christmas preparations.

At the same time, we celebrate Christmas with heavy hearts in the wake of the tragic events that have taken place around the world and here in the United States. The terrorist attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino served as reminders that there are those who oppose our way of life, and the beliefs and values that make America the greatest nation in the world.

I hope it also reminds us to appreciate even more deeply the precious moments we have with our own loved ones. Let us never take for granted the many blessings the Lord has given us. Let it also remind us that there are men and women in our Armed Forces who will not spend Christmas with their loved ones as they stand the watch in defense of our great nation. This Christmas, we must not forget or take for granted their service.

We are a nation blessed with a wealth of riches and, even in the face of unspeakable tragedy, we will come together to help and to heal. May you and yours have a Merry Christmas and may God bless each and every one of you!

The True Meaning of Christmas

I'm sure many have seen the animated television special, "A Charlie Brown Christmas", and I hope that those who haven't will take the time to watch this program that reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. It's during the show that Charlie Brown is dismayed about the over-commercialization of the holiday and struggling to understand the true meaning of Christmas. At one point, Charlie Brown wonders aloud if anyone really knows the true meaning of Christmas. Linus responds by reciting the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verses 8 through 14:

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men.

"That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown," Linus says as he finishes.

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