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# Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, April 8, 2016

APRIL 11TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, April 8, 2016

**“On the Road Again...”**

**April 8th, 2016**

To be successful in your job, it is important to set goals for yourself. For me, those goals are best set by interacting with and listening to the needs, obstacles and struggles of the folks in south central and southeast Missouri. District work periods provide me with that unique opportunity to be home for an extended period time and visit with the businesses, farmers and families I am honored to represent.

46 different events, stops in all 30 counties of Missouri’s 8th Congressional district and over 3,100 miles traveled is how I have spent my past two weeks – to put in perspective that is further than driving from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles. The best way to be an effective representative is through hearing first-hand accounts and stories from residents, community leaders, and small business owners of the different struggles they are facing. This is why I held 8 town-hall meet and greets over the last 2 weeks, hosted 2 - first of their kind Veterans Benefits’ Summits, spoke to numerous local leaders, and visited close to 10 schools.

At one event in Doniphan the line of people wrapped around the block. The community meeting we held there was a great opportunity for me to hear directly from residents about the different issues they are confronting daily and what they care most about. I will carry the messages from that meetings back to the

bureaucrats in Washington who have never set foot in south central or southeast Missouri. Turnout like that is exactly why these district work weeks have become some of my favorite opportunities to engage with folks and revisit some of my favorite places.

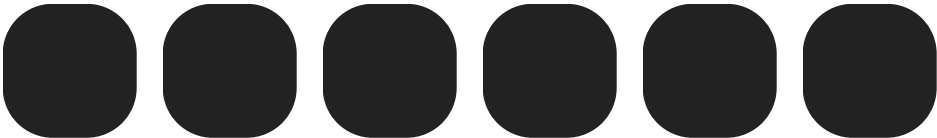
The two Veterans Benefits Summits we hosted were among some of the most rewarding events of the past couple weeks. There are roughly 60,000 veterans in south central and southeast Missouri and assisting those veterans in navigating an often cumbersome and confusing federal process accounts for roughly half of all the casework assistance my office provides each year. These two Summits, hosted in Cape Girardeau and Kennett, were the first of their kind in our district. These Summits were aimed at providing better access and better assistance to the veterans in our area for a variety of issues – making sure our nation’s veterans are taken care of is a very important priority to me and many of the folks in district. The Summits provided a great opportunity for veterans and their families to come to a single location and make contact with all of the federal, state and local agencies and services available to them.

As a 7th generation Missourian, I have a deep passion for serving the folks in the same communities that I grew up. These past two weeks have been a great opportunity to spend time with friends, families and community leaders back home. It will be a difficult plane ride to Washington next week, however seeing so many of the great people in our district over this work period gives me renewed energy to keep fighting for the values, morals and way of life that so many of us enjoy.

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## From Tila Hubrecht - Legislative Update Related to Noranda Aluminum

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APRIL 11TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

### From Tila Hubrecht - Legislative Update Related to Noranda Aluminum

**New Madrid, Missouri** - This week I had the opportunity to support Southeast Missouri by helping pass House Bill 2689 out of the House of Representatives. HB 2689 would enable the Noranda aluminum smelter to receive a sustainable power rate. It is a critical step to restarting the smelter's pot lines and getting people back to work. Without a competitive and sustainable power rate it is very unlikely the smelter will ever produce another pound of aluminum.

House Bill 2689 now moves on to the Senate and is my hope it will pass this legislation as soon as possible. There are only five weeks remaining in this legislative session and time cannot be wasted. The jobs at the smelter are too important for our region and this opportunity cannot be missed.

### Information for Displaced Workers:

Missouri Job Center Programs and Services:

The Missouri Job Centers provide the following programs and services to Dislocated Workers:

- Assessment services to identify your skills, interests and other traits to help guide you to a new career
- Earn a National Career Readiness Certificate, a portable credential measuring

## workplace skills

- Career counseling services to help you explore potential careers, utilize labor market information and identify open jobs that meet your skill sets
- Development of an Individual Employment Plan to assist you in reaching your employment goals
- Job preparation workshops to assist with resume writing, interviewing skills and effective job searching
- Workshops on financial management and starting a small business
- Training and education services that allow you to earn a certificate or work toward a degree
- Work Based Learning programs to either gain valuable work experience or train On-the-Job
- Utilize Job Center equipment to conduct a self directed job search

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Supportive Services may be available to Noranda workers, living out of state, on a limited basis to allow for participation in Career, Individualized or Training services (career counseling, workshops, assessments, or training). Supportive services are not available to individuals participating in self directed services. Eligibility for WIOA Supportive Services is determined on a case by case basis and based on actual need. Allowable Supportive Services include:

- Transportation (mileage reimbursement, car repairs, car payment);
- Child or dependent care;
- Housing (rent, utilities); and
- Tools, uniforms, boots/shoes, clothing or books necessary for training or work.

Eligibility Guidelines for WIOA Supportive Services require:

- Participation in a WIOA Career, Individualized or Training Service;
- Inability to obtain services through any other source, such as faith based organizations, non-profit organizations, government assistance programs, etc; and
- Be able to show how the Supportive Service is necessary to participate in WIOA Individualized or Training services.

### **Trade Act Program:**

The Noranda closure has been certified as a Trade Act eligible event. Trade Act offers the following benefits:

- Training Assistance
  - o Provides up to 130 weeks of full or part time training based on need and Labor Market Information (LMI); or
  - o Up to 130 weeks of Registered Apprenticeship; or
  - o Up to 104 weeks of On-the-Job training based on need and Labor Market Information (LMI).
- Trade Reemployment Allowance (TRA)
  - o Provides benefit similar to Unemployment Insurance (UI) for workers who meet specific criteria. When combined with UI, a worker may receive up to 130 weeks of benefits. Filing deadlines apply.
- Job Search Allowance
  - o Provides a 90% reimbursement of expenses incurred to participate in approved job search activities that are outside the worker's commuting area (commuting area is defined, in Missouri, as 25 miles one-way).
- Relocation Allowance
  - o Provides a 90% reimbursement of moving expenses when suitable employment is obtained outside of the worker's commuting area. Suitable employment is a job that pays at least 80% of the wage rate of the previously held position and is full-time, permanent.
  - o Provides a lump up to \$1,250 for other expenses (deposit on utilities, apartment, etc.)
- Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA)
  - o Provides a wage subsidy for workers who are 50 years old or older that pays half the difference in wage between the previously held job and new employment. Maximum

benefit is two years or \$10,000.

- Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC)

- o Provides a 72.5% tax credit for health insurance premiums. This program is administered by the IRS ([www.irs.com](http://www.irs.com)) and they define which insurance plans are allowable.

§ To be potentially eligible under the Trade Act program, the worker has to be receiving Unemployment Insurance (and be eligible for TRA), TRA, or RTAA.

§ HCTC is on a month to month basis depending on if a UI, TRA, or RTAA payment was drawn.

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## Veterans' Benefits Summit to be Held in Kennett

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APRIL 05TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Veterans' Benefits Summit to be Held in Kennett

**Kennett, Missouri** - Congressman Jason Smith (MO-08) and his regional staff will be coordinating and hosting a second Veterans' Benefits Summit on April 6, 2016 in Kennett, M.O. The summit will provide veterans an opportunity to come to a single location and make contact with a number of federal, state and local departments that handle veterans' affairs to learn about the different resources available to help our nation's veterans.

"We are really excited to be able to hold a second Veterans' Benefits Summit event in Kennett for those who were unable to attend our first event on Saturday in Cape Girardeau. Veteran casework accounts for about half of the entire casework load across our offices, which shows how important this is to us and a large number of people in Southeast Missouri," said Smith. "We have over 60,000 civilian veterans in our congressional district and so many of them are active parts of their communities and we want to do what we can to help them."

The event will take place Wednesday, April 6th, from 2:30pm to 4:00pm at American Legion Post 66 and a number of participating offices have already been confirmed, which include:

- Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office
- Department of Veterans Affairs John J Pershing VA Medical Center
- Missouri Veterans Commission Veterans Service Officers
- Missouri Veterans Commission Cemetery Program-Bloomfield Cemetery
- National Guard/Military Veterans and Family Support
- Social Security Administration
- Small Business Association
- Southeast Missouri Food Bank
- Veterans of Foreign Wars Veterans Service Officer
- Southeast Missouri State University Office of Military and Veterans Services
- Three Rivers College

- Department of Missouri Economic Development Division of Workforce Development

- Manpower

“Some of the most rewarding work we have done is on behalf of the veterans in our community to make sure they know what they are eligible for, help navigate an application, or assist them in finding resources for a successful return to civilian life,” Smith added.

Congressman Smith will kick the event off at 2:30pm with an introduction of the participants as well as be on hand to talk with veterans and try to help answer questions. The address for American Legion Post 66 is 1615 First Street, Kennett, MO 63857. This event is open to everyone.

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## Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, April 1, 2016

APRIL 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN



The Missouri House returned this week from the annual Spring Break. To date the House has seen more than 1,500 bills filed with nearly 450 House Bills already receiving committee approval. At this time the House has approved and sent to the Senate more than 150 bills, and so far only one of the bills has received final approval. The number of bills sent to the Senate is a significant increase from last session when the House had approved just more than 90 bills entering the break. This high volume of bills moving through the process means all legislators will have a heavy workload from now until the end of session.

We passed two bills which I feel will have a direct impact on improving health care for all Missourians. I will share a summary of these two bills from the House communications office.

#### House Approves “Step Therapy” Measure to Improve Access to Vital Medications (HB 2029)

Missourians with chronic illnesses would have better access to the medications they need under legislation approved by the Missouri House this week. The legislation is designed to prevent redundant “step therapy” so that patients who switch health insurance benefits are not forced to try medications that have already proven to be ineffective before being allowed to use medication that works.

The legislation approved by the House simply ensures that a patient will not have to go through the process of trying multiple medications again simply because of an insurance change. In effect, it makes it so the medicine prescribed by the patient’s doctor is the medicine the patient is allowed to take.

The legislation received overwhelming bipartisan support and is now on its way to the Senate for consideration.

#### Expanding Access to Health Care (HB 1923)

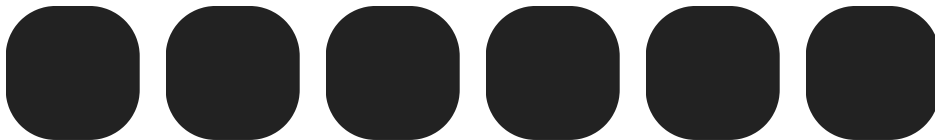
The Missouri House approved legislation this week designed to modernize health care in Missouri, and improve the level of care provided by the state’s system of Medicaid. The legislation brings telehealth services in Missouri into state statute and works to bring greater access to health care to Missourians in rural and underserved areas.

The bill would update Missouri's laws on Medicaid reimbursement in regard to telehealth services so that more health care professionals could provide telehealth care to Medicaid recipients. Supporters of the bill say it is an important change that will allow patients to receive care without having to travel long distances. They noted the change could also result in a significant cost savings. In 2015 the state's Medicaid program allocated more than \$40 million for use in providing non-emergency medical transportation to take patients in underserved areas to see specialists.

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I don't have the typical pedigree for a Congressman, my father was an auto mechanic and

a preacher, my mother was a factory worker. As a teenager, I remember visiting my grandparents for the holidays and having to go outside to pump water out of the cistern which had collected rain water from the roof just to have fresh water. However, I learned firsthand the disciplined work ethic needed to be successful and put myself through college, becoming the first college graduate in my family.

I understand how hard it can be to escape the cycle of poverty, especially in southcentral and southeast Missouri. 1 in 5 people living in Missouri's 8th Congressional district struggle with poverty every day. In 2010, of the 30 counties in our congressional district, 20 had less than half of the number of adults gainfully employed.

The typical answers in Washington have been disheartening – more money, more programs, less results. Instead of creating incentives for people to work hard to get themselves out of poverty, of the over 80 different government programs established to combat poverty, we spend over \$1 trillion each year with no improvements in this country's overall poverty rate. We would be better off just writing a check for \$22,000 to each of the 46 million people living in poverty in this country. Rather what your government has created is what is actually known as the "poverty trap".

The Poverty Trap is any self-reinforcing mechanism which causes poverty to persist. In this country today, for far too many people stuck in poverty, it does not pay to get ahead. Federal government poverty programs are actually creating incentives for people not to work.

The people who have the highest marginal tax rates in this country are not the super wealthy. Instead it's single mothers who struggle to make ends meet and rely on certain government programs for assistance. Under our current support model, if those mothers accept a pay raise from their employer, they actually lose more money than they gain since their reported income will go up and they will no longer be eligible for certain federal support. Where is the incentive to fight for that raise? We have created disincentives to work. People want to work. People want to contribute to their communities. We have to restructure our programs to encourage work, not discourage folks from taking raises for fear of losing benefits.

Speaker Ryan engaged the House of Representatives to become the House of Ideas. That's why I've taken a leadership role both on the Ways and Means Committee on Human Resources and on the newly created Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity and Upward Mobility. Our mission is to work together to strengthen America's social safety net to better help those in need; improve education and training so more can succeed in

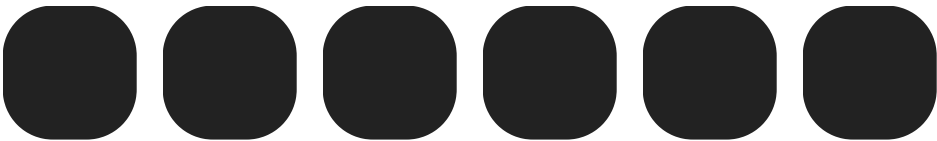
today’s economy; help welfare recipients enter, reenter, and remain in the workforce; and empower everyone to live their own American Dream. As the task force and the Committee continue to work together, we will present bold conservative solutions to reduce poverty by helping people move from welfare to work.

In the words of President Ronald Reagan “We should measure welfare’s success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many people are added.” I will continue to keep poverty reform as one of my top priorities in Congress, because I know that the only real way to solve poverty is to show people a path that encourages them to support themselves and their families. Ultimately, people need a hand up, not a hand out.

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