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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, November 4, 2016

NOVEMBER 07TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, November 4, 2016

Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report

Let's Find the Time

November 4th, 2016

For over 200 years American patriots have shed their blood to fight for independence, liberty, and a democratic process that puts more power into the hands of citizens than monarchs and tyrants. Our country's history is also marked with numerous physical and political battles to expand the right to vote to millions more deserved Americans.

Unfortunately today participation in elections in the U.S. is some of the lowest among developed countries. In fact, voter turnout has not surpassed 65% since 1948.

When comparing the U.S. to other developed countries we rank 31st among 35 in terms of voter participation in the democratic process. U.S. turnout in the 2012 presidential election was 53.6%, while Belgium, Turkey, and Sweden were all above 80%. Further, only about 65% of the U.S. voting-age population was registered in 2012, compared with 91% in Canada and the United Kingdom and nearly 99% in Japan.

Often getting to the polls becomes a choice between participating in the process and

another must accomplish task of the day. While balancing the time commitment on election day can be difficult we find examples throughout the world where some risk their own safety to have their voices heard. Despite threats from the Taliban, Afghan women in 2014 turned out to vote risking their own lives to cast a vote in local and presidential elections. In Nepal, some voters walked hours to reach polling places because the election commission restricted the use of unregistered vehicles on the country's roads on election day in 2013. Despite this inconvenience, voter turnout in Nepal was 65%.

Some choose not to vote because they feel their one vote doesn't matter. However, when you look throughout American political history, we see otherwise. In 1960, the election between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon was won by Kennedy but the difference was less than 120,000 votes nationally or 0.1%.

More recently the 2000 presidential election between Al Gore and George W. Bush was razor thin. The election, ultimately won by Bush, came down to a single state and a few hundred votes. Ultimately it was a mere 537 votes out of more than 5.9 million cast in Florida that decided the outcome of the election. Perhaps most famously though was the 1948 race between Harry S. Truman and Thomas Dewey which was so close that the Chicago Tribune printed newspapers with the headline "Dewey Defeats Truman" and prompted one of the most famous pictures in U.S. history as President-elect Truman displayed the newspaper from the back of a train after being announced the eventual winner.

Casting our votes is our right as American, it's what separates our democracy from some of the most oppressive tyrannical regimes still present in today's world, and is something thousands of Americans throughout our history have fought to protect. American women fought a long battle to secure the right to vote. Many women who participated in the Women's Suffrage Movement in the 1910's, were often jailed for their peaceful protests and in jail were often tortured, beaten and forced to live in inhumane conditions. However, their efforts were not in vain after women gained the right to vote through the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Throughout the 1960's, many states employed discriminatory voter suppression tactics to keep African-Americans from the polls. Thus the Civil Rights Movement began in which thousands of African-Americans protested for their right to vote, often being subjected to violence like the protest on "Bloody Sunday" where 500 activists marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama only to be met by police who attacked them with billy clubs and tear gas, all because they peacefully demanded the right to vote.

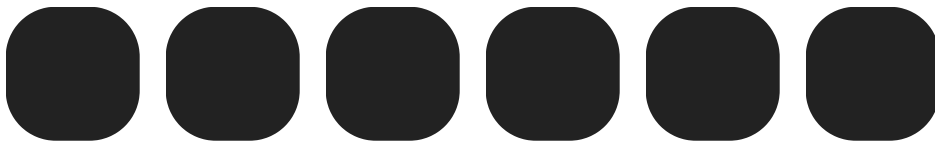
The feeling of freely casting your vote is something millions more around the world still

do not know. On November 8th millions of Americans will cast our votes and exercise one of the most important rights bestowed to us because it preserves ALL other rights we are granted and sets the direction for our country, state and locality for years to come. This year the decision we make is a critical one about who we will be as a nation, our standing in the world, the safety of our communities, the quality of our healthcare, and unleashing our potential. For these reasons and for those who gave us this privilege I hope we can all find the time.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - All Tricks, No Treats

OCTOBER 30TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - All Tricks, No Treats

**Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report
For Service – All Tricks, No Treats**

October 28th, 2016

Thousands of brave Americans have answered the call of duty to serve our country and protect us from terrorism. These brave soldiers fought tirelessly to defend our country in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the globe. I was appalled this week to learn along with millions of Americans that now some fifteen years later, many of these soldiers are being asked to repay enlistment bonuses doled out during the global war on terror.

In order to keep highly trained and desirable personnel in the service, the US military has long used incentives such as re-enlistment bonuses. In the early 2000's the US military used re-enlistment bonuses and other incentives for thousands of National Guard Troops in California. In 2010, revelations about mismanagement by the California National Guard surfaced. Following these findings, nearly 10,000 soldiers who were given bonuses were ordered to repay them or face serious financial penalties such as wage garnishments and tax liens. That's right, because of bureaucratic mismanagement, our country's soldiers were being asked to make up for the mistakes of paper pushers.

It is clear that Military recruiters betrayed these soldiers, making promises they could not keep and offering incentives they were not authorized to give, but our nation's heroes should not have to pay for the mistakes of military officials' from over a decade ago. In May I helped pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to help correct this injustice by putting a stop to the military going after soldiers for mistakes like this that military personnel make. Simply put, our troops should not be punished for the mistakes made by the Department of Defense.

In 2007, President Obama made a promise to the American people to 'ensure that our troops have the resources, support, and equipment they need to protect themselves and fulfill their mission', but the reality today is that throughout his presidency he has consistently put military readiness and the interests of our troops on the back burner. In early September, a leaked Pentagon memo revealed the Obama Administration's plan to veto this year's National Defense Bill which would have ended the outrageous action of recouping 15 year old military payments. That same Defense Authorization Act included a much needed pay raise for our troops and \$2.5 billion for necessary training and maintenance which are funding needs identified as critical by the military services.

Whether they are still on the battlefield or back home, we have a duty to take care of our soldiers. Just this week I met with VA officials to discuss the VA facilities in southeast and south central Missouri. I had previously shared with them the signatures of 5,700

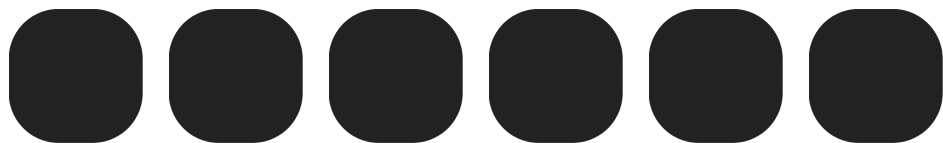
Missourians seeking increased care and services for the veterans in our area and I reiterated my support for such in our meeting. I was pleased that during the meeting the VA confirmed they would expand services, options and care hours at a facility in south central Missouri. Additionally, later in the day the pentagon finally announced that they would no longer be trying to recoup the old bonus payments from our soldiers. While millions of American families are struggling to make ends meet, asking our military members to make repayments because of bureaucratic errors was not appropriate or fair.

With so many problems facing our country and our government it is embarrassing that going after payments to our soldiers was ever a priority. The Department of Defense owes it to the American people to be focused on eradicating entities like ISIS and staying vigilant against terror threats abroad and here at home. The White House should be less focused on vetoing legislation containing pay increases and resources for American troops and instead on how to mitigate the threats from countries like Iran and North Korea. It's time your government put at the top of its responsibility list the safety and security of you and your family, not its own misguided agenda.

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A Look Ahead to the November Ballot Issues

OCTOBER 14TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

A Look Ahead to the November Ballot Issues

Missouri - November will give voters the opportunity to decide important races for the presidency, statewide offices, and other state and local offices and issues. Missourians will also have the opportunity to decide several ballot measures that could make important changes to the way the state operates. Ranging in topic from voter identification to tax increases on cigarettes, the ballot issues represent the efforts of the legislature and the initiative petition process, as well as the state constitution, to empower voters to decide important issues for the state.

These races and issues make it extremely important that voters turn out to make their voices heard on November 8.

A detailed overview of each of the ballot issues is included below.

Constitutional Amendment 1 – Missouri’s Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

Constitutional Amendment 1 will give Missourians the opportunity to decide if the state should continue its one-tenth of one percent sales/use tax that is used to support soil and water conservation, and for state parks and historic sites. The tax was first approved by voters in 1984, and then again in 1988, 1996, and 2006. The renewal of the tax is re-submitted to voters every 10 years under the state constitution. The tax generates approximately \$90 million each year for soil and water conservation, and for the operation of the state park system.

Supporters of the tax point out that more than 61,000 conservation practices have been implemented through \$348 million in cost-share grant projects since the tax was last renewed in 2006. The funds have helped to prevent millions of tons of soil from eroding into Missouri’s rivers and lakes. Funding is also utilized to maintain and improve Missouri’s 88 parks and historic sites.

Constitutional Amendment 2 – Campaign Contribution Limits

If approved by voters, Constitutional Amendment 2 will re-establish campaign contribution limits in Missouri. The state previously had limits in place that were approved by voters in 1994. The limits were repealed by the General Assembly in 2008.

Constitutional Amendment 2 would limit contributions to individual candidates to \$2,600 per election. It would limit contributions to political parties to \$25,000 each election. The amendment is also designed to prevent individuals and entities from intentionally concealing the source of the contributions. Additionally, the amendment would create a complaint process and penalties for violating its requirements.

Supporters of the amendment say it is important to restore limits so that large donors do not have too much influence in the political realm. Opponents say the current system ensures transparency in the system and a return to limits will only cause large donors to hide their contributions by funneling them through various political committees.

Constitutional Amendment 3 – Cigarette Tax Increase for Early Childhood Education

Constitutional Amendment 3 is one of two proposals on the ballot that would increase the tax on cigarettes. Amendment 3 would increase taxes on cigarettes until 2020 when the total increase would reach 60 cents per pack of 20. The amendment also would create a 67-cent per pack fee for wholesalers to pay on certain cigarettes.

If approved by voters the amendment would generate between \$263 million and \$374 million each year. The additional revenues would be placed in an Early Childhood Health and Education Trust Fund and utilized for early childhood education.

Supporters of the proposal say Missouri lags behind other states in providing state-funded preschool programs. They also note that Missouri currently has the lowest tax on cigarette sales in the country. Missouri currently taxes cigarettes at the rate of 17 cents per pack tax while the national average is at \$1.65 per pack. Opponents have raised concerns that the proposal is a “tax scheme” that will divert money away from public K-12 schools and allow for public funds to be used by private schools. They also note that language in the proposal would restrict the funding from being used for the enforcement of tobacco laws and smoking cessation programs. Additionally, the funds raised by the measure would be allocated by an unelected commission rather than by the normal appropriations process.

Proposition A – Cigarette Tax Increase for Transportation Infrastructure

The second cigarette tax increase proposal on the November ballot would slowly increase the tax per pack and then use the additional revenue to fund transportation infrastructure projects in Missouri. Proposition A would increase the tax on each pack of cigarettes by 13 cents in 2017, by 5 cents in 2019, and by another 5 cents in 2021. The total increase would amount to 23 cents for a total tax in Missouri of 40 cents per pack of 20. The proposal would also increase the tax that sellers pay on other tobacco products by 5 percent of the manufacturer's invoice price.

When fully implemented, the tax increases would generate approximately \$95 million to \$103 million each year. The money would then be placed in a Transportation Infrastructure Fund to be used for road repairs throughout the state.

Both tax increase measures have been opposed by groups like the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association, which say neither tax increase is big enough. Some groups also take issue with the fact the campaigns for both measures are supported by tobacco companies. Constitutional Amendment 3 has received financial support from big tobacco companies like R.J. Reynolds, while Proposition A has received support from smaller cigarette companies. The small companies have opposed Constitutional Amendment 3 because of the 67 cents per pack fee increase that is directed at them. Backers of Amendment 3 say the fee increase is meant to close a loophole that has allowed small companies to avoid making payments to 46 states mandated by a multi-state court settlement to help offset Medicaid costs.

If both measures were to be approved by voters, Missouri law says the proposal with the greater number of affirmative votes would take effect, but the final outcome would likely be decided in court.

Constitutional Amendment 4 – Prohibition on New Sales and Use Taxes

Constitutional Amendment 4 would prohibit state or local sales or use taxes on services. In effect, the proposal would ensure that governmental entities do not create new taxes on services such as a haircut or a repair service for a vehicle.

In recent years states like North Carolina and Washington have enacted taxes on services. North Carolina's new tax extends to services like auto repair, sign painting, and some heating and plumbing work. States have enacted the new taxes in an effort to make up for lagging revenues from lower sales tax collections. Amendment 4 is designed to ensure similar taxes cannot be put into place in Missouri. The amendment has been supported by business organizations such as the Missouri Bankers Association, the Missouri Press

Association, and the Missouri Association of Realtors, which circulated the petition to put the amendment on the ballot.

Constitutional Amendment 6 – Voter Identification

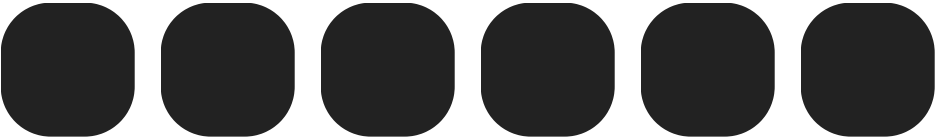
Constitutional Amendment 6 will allow voters to decide if the Missouri Constitution should be changed to allow a system of voter identification. If approved by voters, legislation approved by the Missouri General Assembly would then implement the system of voter identification. The new law would require voters to present a specified form of identification in order to vote in a public election. Valid forms of identification would include photo IDs issued by the state, the federal government or the military. The proposal also would require the state to pay for individuals to obtain a valid ID if they do not have one, or to obtain documents necessary for an ID. Additionally, the new law contains a provision that would allow a voter without a valid photo ID to vote with a regular ballot by showing another form of identification.

Supporters of the voter identification system say it is important to protect the integrity of the elections system. They say requiring a photo ID will prevent voter fraud at the polling place by requiring each voter to prove that they are who they say they are. They also note the provisions of the new law make it easy for anyone without an ID to obtain one. Opponents of the measure say a system of voter identification will disenfranchise voters who do not have a photo ID, or the means to easily obtain one. They also say there are no proven cases of voter fraud to warrant the creation of a voter ID system.

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TARS Seeking New Members

OCTOBER 14TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

TARS Seeking New Members

Dexter, Missouri - Are you 13 - 19 years of age? Interested in politics? Want to become a member of the Stoddard County TeenAge Republican Club? (TARS) is organizing and looking for great teenagers to join!

TARS is a club for teens ages 13-19 in middle school and high school who are interested in politics and government!

They meet monthly and their meetings move around the county to allow everyone an opportunity to be a part of this group! You are not required to attend every meeting but they do ask you to be involved in the events near your home.

If you are interested and would like more information please call or text Tila Hubrecht (club sponsor) at (573) 820-6052 or email tilahubrecht@gmail.com

Some of the things they do: Walk in parades, staff fair booths, participate in phone banks, hand out campaign literature...and have fun!

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, September 23, 2016

SEPTEMBER 24TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, September 23, 2016

Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report: Why Risk This? September 23rd, 2016

1,811. It was learned this week that was the number of illegal aliens who were ‘mistakenly’ granted American citizenship by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. All of these 1,811 illegal immigrants now turned American citizens were previously ordered to be deported or removed from the U.S. for various reasons, including criminal activity and because their home countries were flagged as ‘special interest countries’ or threats to the United States. This is not only unacceptable, but it’s horrifying. Your federal government, the single entity responsible for the safety of millions of American families is actually doing the opposite – putting them more at risk.

Just this past weekend, twenty-nine people were injured when a bomb exploded in New York City and nine people were victims of a stabbing at a mall in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Both of these attacks were ones of terror. More must be done to strengthen our national security to ensure that those who wish to do Americans harm don’t have that opportunity.

Unfortunately we see the opposite happening. While hundreds scheduled for deportation

are now wrongfully granted American citizenship because of an error in fingerprint tracking, the Obama Administration continues to push forward with a plan to ship more and more terrorists from American custody back to the battlefield to commit atrocities against our brave military men and women and innocents across the globe. Simply put, the Obama White House continues to ignore the evidence that nearly one-in-three former detainees return to their jihadist activity upon their release. In an interview last December, with 653 confirmed terrorists once held in Guantanamo Bay already released, President Obama stated, “we assume that there are going to be -out of four, five, six hundred people that get released- a handful of them are going to be embittered and still engaging in anti-U.S. activities and trying to link up potentially with their old organizations.” Unfortunately the President’s rhetoric doesn’t match reality, at the time of that statement, of the 653 who had been released, it was confirmed by the Director of National Intelligence that 196 of these individuals were either confirmed or suspected of returning to terrorist activity – more than just ‘a handful’ I’d say.

Why is the President giving these individuals the opportunity to once again spread the disease of terrorism and hate back in their home countries and once again plan horrifying acts against American citizens? That is why I helped co-author and pass legislation last week to prohibit the transfer of any individual detained at Guantanamo Bay. Don’t let the statements by the Obama Administration fool you into thinking that the closing of that facility does not pose a risk to the safety of our nation. The fact is that the Obama Administration is downplaying just how dangerous those housed at Guantanamo Bay are to fulfill a campaign promise before he leaves office - once again putting politics ahead of the true interest of the American people.

It is the number one job of the federal government to provide for the defense and security of the American people. At a time when our country is under a constant threat of terrorism, we cannot give those who wish to do us harm the chance to attack innocent Americans. We must deny access to those who jeopardize our national security whether they are known terrorists housed at Guantanamo Bay or illegal immigrants who have been mistakenly granted American Citizenship. I remain committed to fighting for the safety of Missourians including physically securing our borders, thoroughly screening and vetting anyone desiring to enter our country with background checks, thwarting the release of any more terrorists back to the battlefield and providing our military men and women with the resources they need to get the job done.. despite the Obama Administration’s attempts to do otherwise.

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