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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Total Eclipse of the Heartland

AUGUST 21ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Total Eclipse of the Heartland

Congressman Smith Capitol Report Total Eclipse of the Heartland August 18, 2017

On Monday, August 21, 2017, Missourians and folks all across the United States will experience a once in a lifetime event, the 2017 Great American Solar Eclipse. The last time this happened in the continental U.S. was nearly 40 years ago. What's even more exciting is that a total solar eclipse has not been seen in our area since 1442!

For a couple of minutes around noon on Monday, you can expect total darkness. Birds will stop singing, crickets will start chirping, and your farm animals may think it's time to head back to the barn for the night. During this time, while the sun is directly behind the moon, we will be able to see stars and planets we can't normally see. We will also be able to see the "corona," or the outer edge, of the sun.

In the parts of Missouri that are along the "path of totality," they are expecting record breaking crowds. Hotels and motels have sold out, and I've even heard about folks renting space on their farms for tourists in RVs and people who want to set up camp to watch the eclipse.

According to the St. Louis Eclipse Task Force, the eclipse will cut across Missouri starting at St. Joseph in the West and cross over to Ste. Genevieve in the East. More than

3 million Missourians live in the path of totality. Areas of our district that will be in the path of totality include DeSoto, Farmington, Festus, Hillsboro, Perryville, Potosi, Ste. Genevieve and Sullivan.

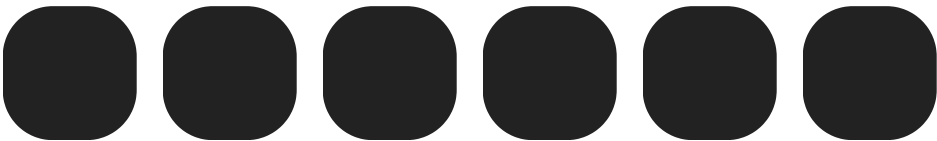
The Great American Eclipse is a once in a lifetime event, but it’s also a great example of the growing agri-tourism and entertainment industry in our area. As I’ve taken the month of August to focus on farms, I have seen just how quickly this industry is growing, and I am excited that we have a truly cosmic event to spur this industry along. In fact, at one of my stops in Jefferson County, they were getting ready to host an eclipse viewing event on their farm handing out eclipse viewing glasses, Sun Chips and more eclipse-themed gear! This natural phenomenon is bringing visitors from all over the world to our little corner of the country, and while they are here, they’ll see for themselves what makes it great to live in the 8th.

We have an awesome opportunity to enjoy Missouri’s great outdoors and spend time with friends and family, but we have to do it safely. Remember, you cannot look directly at the sun without damaging your eyes, so you must wear a pair of certified solar eclipse glasses. If you can’t find these, you can watch online. For more information about local events near you, visit MissouriEclipse2017.com

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Senator Blunt Co-Sponsors Arla Harrell Act

AUGUST 17TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Senator Blunt Co-Sponsors Arla Harrell Act

Blunt-Backed Arla Harrell Act Signed Into Law

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.) released the following statement after President Trump signed the Arla Harrell Act, which Blunt cosponsored, into law.

“The VA has inexcusably denied benefits to Arla Harrell and countless other WWII veterans who suffered lifelong illness due to the unconscionable experiments they were forced to endure,” Blunt said. “These veterans put their lives on the line for our country, only to face a broken bureaucracy that refuses to acknowledge the wrong that was done to them and provide the care they need as a result. I’m pleased this measure is now law, and heroes like Arla will finally receive the acknowledgement, assistance, and care they deserve.”

According to an NPR report, mustard gas experiments were conducted on an estimated 60,000 World War II veterans by the Army and Navy at more than a dozen locations. Due to the decades of secrecy surrounding the experiments, the vast majority of these veterans have had their claims denied by the VA. The Arla Harrell Act requires the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to revise their policies for processing claims for mustard gas exposure, and to reconsider all previously denied claims. The bill requires the VA to presume that a veteran experienced full-body exposure to mustard gas or lewisite unless proven otherwise.

In the final days of World War II, an 18-year-old Army private from Missouri named Arla Wayne Harrell was sent to Camp Crowder, where he said he was twice exposed to mustard gas.

He didn’t talk about it for years. When he finally did, he told his family that the Army warned him he’d be thrown in jail if he ever disclosed the experiments. Harrell, known as “Arlie,” has been rejected three times by the Department of Veterans Affairs for claims to help treat a lung disorder and skin cancer that his family believes are connected to that exposure.

Harrell is in a nursing home in Macon, Missouri unable to walk or speak.

But 55 pages of military records in his family’s possession show that right after Arlie Harrell said he was twice tested with mustard gas, in late July 1945, he was hospitalized at Camp Crowder with a high fever and a sore throat. The Army diagnosed it as nasopharyngitis — an inflammation of mucous membranes between the nose and throat — along with tonsillitis and severe gum disease.

Harrell and his wife, Betty, raised three daughters and two sons in Kansas City, and later, in the town of Bevier, Missouri. Harrell was a truck driver and mechanic; his wife worked as a nurse.

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Senator McCaskill to Hold Town Hall in Dexter

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McCaskill to Hold Town Hall in Dexter

Senator—who has held more public, in-person town halls as Senator than the rest of Missouri’s delegation combined—will host dozens more throughout August in traditionally conservative counties

Dexter, Missouri - U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill—who has hosted more public town halls throughout Missouri in her time as Senator than the rest of Missouri’s Congressional delegation combined—will hold a public town hall at the Stoddard County Ambulance District in Dexter on Saturday, August 19.

Saturday, August 19 at 2:30 p.m. CT at the Stoddard County Ambulance District in Dexter, McCaskill will hold a public town hall, with media availability to follow.

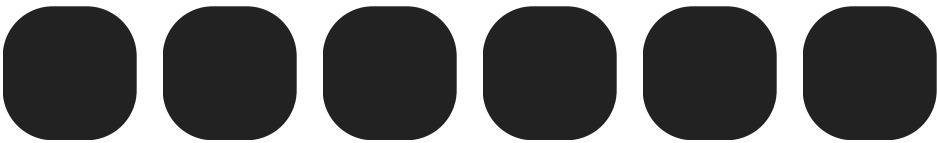
“The best way for Missourians to know that their voices are heard in Washington is for me to show up, and hear them in person,” said McCaskill, who was raised in rural Missouri. “Whether they agree with me or not, every Missourian is my boss, which is why I consider it a must, to go to every corner of the state I love, to hear those ideas and concerns directly, and hold myself accountable to Missourians.”

On previous tours this year, McCaskill has already hosted eighteen public town halls throughout Missouri. During debate over the Affordable Care Act—at a time of heightened demonstrations against the legislation—McCaskill held a series of highly publicized town halls, including in traditionally conservative areas of Missouri, to hear directly from Missourians about their concerns and respond to criticisms. In 2014, McCaskill logged more than 1,000 miles around the state on her “McCaskill on Main Street” series of public town halls. McCaskill has also toured the state with town halls aimed at military veterans and seniors—and has hosted individual town halls, such as one she hosted last year with then-U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack focused on the opioid epidemic.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - The Time to Act is Now

AUGUST 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - The Time to Act is Now

Congressman Smith Capitol Report
The Time to Act is Now
August 11, 2017

When I spend time with folks across southeast and south central Missouri, whether it's at my public roundtables, multiple small business stops or frequent listening posts, I consistently hear from families whose healthcare premiums and copayments have doubled, individuals who only have one, or in some cases no health insurance choices, and business owners who are spending more and more of their hard-earned resources trying to comply with costly Obamacare regulations than actually using those resources to provide benefits and coverage for their employees.

As I take the month of August to focus on farms, I have heard so many Missouri farmers tell me the number one thing they are concerned about is their health insurance costs and access. One family I spoke with is paying \$20,000 a year for their Obamacare health insurance, and that is WITH the help of cost sharing subsidies. Another farmer I spoke with has sacrificed health insurance for himself because he can only afford it for his wife and daughter.

During my many trips back to Missouri between votes and committee hearings, my conversations with farmers and small business owners often come back to the same question, "my costs to provide healthcare for my family and employees is through the roof, how do we get them down?" At one of my healthcare roundtables in Cape Girardeau, I heard from a packed house where nearly everyone, including doctors, said we needed more price transparency in healthcare. I couldn't agree more. At another one of my healthcare roundtables in Rolla, we had more than 40 folks in the room, nearly all of whom were concerned about the dwindling number of providers in the area. Unfortunately, under Obamacare, 26 of 30 counties in Missouri's 8th Congressional District only have one insurer to choose from. There is no choice, and there is no competition, which means higher prices.

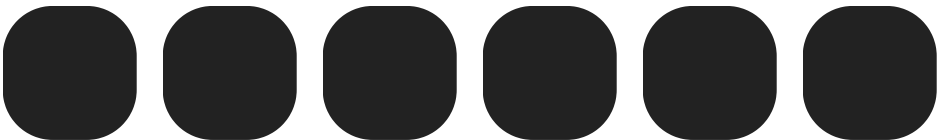
Our country is better than this. We cannot allow hardworking Americans to suffer under Obama’s failing healthcare law. The House of Representatives has made progress on bills that will allow insurance to be sold across state lines and give people who own small businesses or run farms the opportunity to band together, buy insurance as a larger group and lower their overall costs. We have passed bills to end the anti-trust exemption for insurance providers to bring back competition. We have worked hard to give Americans relief from the burden of Obamacare, and it’s time for the U.S. Senate to do the same. In order to finish what we’ve started, Senators are going to have to stop letting politics get in the way, do what’s right for the American people and take action on legislation that will make a difference.

We have a president who is ready to sign a repeal bill for one of the most intrusive pieces of legislation in my lifetime, and the House of Representatives has voted to repeal and replace Obamacare multiple times. Now the Senate has a choice. Do they want to finish the work to relieve Missourians and folks all across the country of the burden that is Obamacare or continue with the status quo? People have shouldered this burden long enough, and the time to act is now.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Focus on Farms

AUGUST 09TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Focus on Farms

Congressman Smith Capitol Report

A Focus on Farms

August 4, 2017

For the fifth year in a row, I am dedicating the month of August to focus on farms in southeast and south central Missouri, stopping in all 30 counties of our district. Meeting the people who run these operations gives me a real understanding of the challenges they are facing and how I can help them.

The best way for me to represent southeast and south central Missouri is to be in southeast and south central Missouri to meet directly with the families, farmers and small business owners who are often the hardest hit by out of touch government policies. These firsthand conversations allow me to carry the message of southern Missourians back to Washington and fight for our way of life.

Most weekdays, I am stuck in Washington casting votes on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives or attending committee hearings. I relish the weekend when I am able to take the first flight out and get back to Missouri to spend time with friends, family, neighbors and all of the down to earth folks I am fortunate enough to represent. Not to mention, getting a break from sleeping on the floor of my office in D.C. is nice. August is a great opportunity to spend more than just Saturday and Sunday getting to know the small business owners, families and especially farmers in our area. That is why I will continue to dedicate my August to visiting the thousands of farms which call southeast and south central Missouri home.

The state of Missouri has over 96 thousand farm operations and more than 28 million acres of farmland. We are also the 11th largest agricultural export state in the country,

shipping nearly four billion dollars’ worth of products grown in Missouri across the country and around the world. In fact, in our district alone, we have four of the top soybean producing counties in the state. We are also one of the most diverse agriculture districts in the country, producing everything from cotton and cattle to rice and wine.

It is only the first week of our month-long focus on farms, and I’ve already heard about the need for less regulations and a simpler, fairer and flatter tax code. When I stopped in Iron County, Josh Campbell, who runs Campbell Farm, told me, “tell the feds to stop interfering with farmers and just let farmers, farm.” I could not agree more.

One of the regulations I heard most about during last year’s focus on farms was the Waters of the United States rule, which was trying to federally regulate every drop of water on Missouri farmer’s land. Fortunately, over the last year, I have been able to work with the Trump Administration to successfully repeal this harmful rule.

Agriculture has a major impact on our economy and our rural way of life in southeast and south central Missouri. This is why it is so important for me to spend time with the folks who run Missouri’s farm operations. It is a huge portion of our economy, providing jobs in our area and putting food on the table for folks in Missouri and across America. After I finish our fifth annual focus on farms at the end of August, I look forward to taking the concerns I hear to D.C. and making a difference on the issues that matter most to the people who work daily to feed and supply America.

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