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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Education Our Way

AUGUST 26TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Education Our Way

Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report
Education Our Way
August 25, 2017

Another school year has begun and the sights and sounds of Friday night lights are filling the air. The beginning of a new school year and the return of high school football also reminds me about the importance of local choice, local control and local leadership over the education of the children raised here in south central and southeast Missouri.

Parents and educators who live here, who raise their families here and who know what's best for our children should be making the decision about their education, not some bureaucrat in Washington. Our teachers are in these classrooms to teach, not to spend hours pushing paper to comply with federal testing standards which try to compare our children to ones raised in San Francisco. Teachers should be free to educate, not worrying about Washington regulations looming over them as they work to inspire their students.

I was at Jefferson R-7 High School last spring when the school superintendent gave me a MASSIVE stack of papers that the federal government was requiring him to fill out, wasting hours upon hours of his time complying with government rules instead of using his time to focus on the local school district. This kind of interference from Washington in our classrooms is unacceptable.

When I first joined Congress, we were able to pass legislation that would give local control back to our schools. Unfortunately, Senate Liberals and the Obama Administration wanted to keep their federal power over Missouri schools. They sent a watered-down version of the bill back to us, taking away the local control provisions I fought so hard for. I voted against this legislation because I know our schools run best when they are managed on the local level, and this bill left too much decision-making power about your child's education in the hands of Washington bureaucrats.

During my time in office, I have visited schools in all thirty counties which make up the 8th Congressional district. I relish the opportunity to interact with teachers, students and parents to hear more about what issues they are facing in the classroom and how I can help them. Beyond the challenges of keeping up with unrealistic and burdensome federal requirements, teachers consistently tell me they are struggling to keep their classrooms stocked with supplies, with many taking money out of their own paycheck to buy materials needed to help their students learn. Because of this, I co-authored legislation that provided hardworking teachers with a tax cut on the supplies they buy on their own which will help our teachers save money while providing supplies for their students.

At almost all of my stops, I also heard about how much waste was being created by programs like Michelle Obama's federally mandated school lunch plan. In 2010, then First Lady Michelle Obama along with liberal leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid took their interference from the classroom to the lunch room and unveiled new government rules for how your kids should eat when they are at school, creating more expenses and unfunded Washington mandates for our local school districts – often resulting in schools having to scale back the amount of meals they could afford to serve.

As students get back to school and you head out to enjoy the local high school football game, Congress must get back to work and take action on tax cuts, infrastructure investments, lowering healthcare costs, and improving national security. As we work on these issues, I will continue my fight to keep Washington out of Missourians' homes, pocketbooks, family farms and children's classrooms, making sure you and your family can enjoy the freedom of locally controlled schools.

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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

AUGUST 16TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Senator McCaskill to Hold Town Hall in Dexter

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.

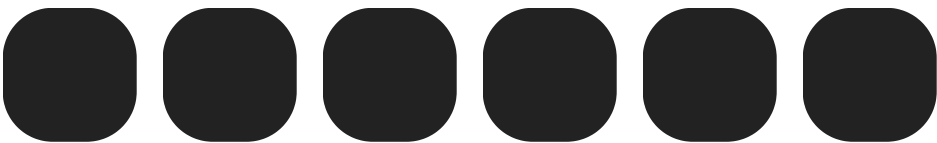
“The best way for Missourians to know that their voices are heard in Washington is for me to show up, and hear them in person,” said McCaskill, who was raised in rural Missouri. “Whether they agree with me or not, every Missourian is my boss, which is why I consider it a must, to go to every corner of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