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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Reining in a Rogue Regime

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***Congressman Smith Capitol Report
Reining in a Rogue Regime
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The era of strategic patience and capitulation symptomatic of the Obama Administration and their approach to North Korea finally ended this week. President Trump has now formally declared and labeled North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. What does that mean? It's simple, President Trump is holding North Korea accountable for actions that aim to terrorize and destabilize society - standing up for America and fighting for our interests across the globe.

When President Trump announced his decision to put North Korea on the state sponsor of terrorism list, my thoughts immediately went to the family of American student Otto Warmbier. Otto was on a study abroad trip with his university in 2016 when he was imprisoned and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for allegedly stealing a propaganda poster from his hotel as a keepsake. Even though his parents pleaded, the Obama Administration insisted that it was best to do nothing and wait patiently for North Korea to comply with our appeals to send Otto home. By the time he was returned to his parents in America, the damage done was irreversible. Otto was tortured mentally and physically by the cruel and inhumane North Korean regime. He came back on his death bed, and weeks later, we watched Otto Warmbier's parents grieve the loss of their son at the hands

of North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-un.

Sadly, the loss of Otto is just one of many tragic examples of an innocent person who was tortured and killed at the hands of this brutal dictatorship. In Otto's memory, I worked with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass the Otto Warmbier North Korea Nuclear Sanctions Act. This bill tightens the reins on North Korea's rogue regime and blocks their access to markets that finance weapons programs. In addition to cutting off North Korea's access to funding, Congress is shoring up the United States' critical missile defense system. This year, with the support of President Trump, we approved the National Defense Authorization Act, to invest in our military's ability to prevent a nuclear weapon from ever reaching our shores by increasing the overall number of ground-based interceptors to counter the growing threat from North Korea's ballistic missile program.

We simply cannot allow North Korea to threaten and intimidate innocent civilian populations with an arsenal of nuclear weapons. Between the actions of Congress and the Trump Administration, we are sending a strong message to North Korea. In the words of President Trump, "Do not try us."

President Trump has shown time and again that the United States takes it seriously when other countries cheat on deals. Whether renegotiating failed trade agreements or decertifying Obama's Iran Nuclear "Deal" to move forward with a new, strong strategy, which no longer puts American families at risk, President Trump is putting the security and safety of our nation first.

Until North Korea ceases all support for international terrorism, recognizes basic human rights and stops their rhetoric of "wiping America off the face of the earth," we will wage a maximum pressure campaign to isolate and financially starve this murderous regime. In the coming weeks, additional sanctions from the Trump Administration will be rolled out to further isolate North Korea, and President Trump will continue to work and form strategic alliances in Asia to isolate and financially cut off North Korea. Just last month, President Trump was able to convince China to remove and suspend all banking support for North Korea for the first time ever. We are resolved in our commitment to punish Kim Jong-un and his rogue regime with sanctions and, with the support of President Trump, will exhaust all options until we see North Korea cease their aggressive actions towards the United States and our allies and take steps toward lasting stability and peace.

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