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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Freedom of Faith

AUGUST 10TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Congressman Smith Capitol Report
Freedom of Faith
August 3, 2018

America, in her earliest days, was founded as a safe haven for religious people. After our founding fathers fought a revolution and established this liberty, many Europeans fled persecution of their faiths and suffered a long, perilous pilgrimage to America to find free land. A land of people united in establishing a country unlike any other seen before, a union of free states governed by people with the freedom to live according to their own individual conscience and religious beliefs.

Religious liberty is easily taken for granted in the United States, where we are separated from hundreds of years of religious persecution on the other side of the world. Today millions of Christians still face exile, prison, torture, or worse simply for practicing their faith. ISIS regularly kills people who practice other religions and kidnaps and beheads Christians. In Africa, Boko Haram is holding hostage Leah Sharibu, a 15-year-old Christian girl kidnapped from Nigeria who refuses to denounce her faith. Iran has raided several house churches and sentenced 52 people who have converted religions to long prison sentences. And Turkish officials have been holding American pastor Andrew Brunson hostage since October 2016.

President Trump is taking important steps to guarantee religious protections within U.S. borders. President Trump's administration established the Religious Liberty Task Force this week and has issued executive orders to federal agencies making clear that "Americans do not give up their freedom of religion by participating in the marketplace or interacting with government." When our founding fathers established freedom of religion, it wasn't just freedom of worship. My father was a preacher, I know that true religious liberty isn't just choosing where you can gather and worship with like-minded people, it's the ability to live out your faith in all aspects of your life.

"Nothing is more dreaded than the national government meddling with faith," wrote John Adams in 1812, but unfortunately today there are many who want the federal government to force religious people into actions against their consciences and their beliefs. Two states are now suing the Little Sisters of the Poor, an Order of Catholic nuns devoted to caring for the elderly and sick, to force them to provide contraceptives under Obamacare. And it's not just the nuns they're after – organizations are suing to prohibit any religious expression on the graves of the soldiers who died for our freedoms.

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a troubling split decision that the Peace Cross, a 90-year-old memorial in Maryland dedicated to soldiers who gave their lives for the United States in World War I, was unconstitutional. The court applied a broad definition of "inherently religious" symbols, even though the American Legion funded and built the memorial which was specifically designed to symbolize the soldier's grave markers at their final resting place on foreign soil. This decision is troubling because it could undermine freedom of religion in the entire country. It could lead to the federal government taking down many federal monuments and historical places that use a cross or other "inherently religious" symbols, including at Arlington National Cemetery. I filed a judicial brief with Senator Ted Cruz and Representative Steve Scalise, arguing the Supreme Court should side with the American Legion and preserve the memory of fallen soldiers and their religious faith. In America we cherish the right to live your religion freely, and the federal government should not rob the soldiers who died for our freedoms and their loved ones their last expression of faith.

As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, I am ensuring the U.S. tax code does not discriminate against people of faith. I've written legislation barring the government from forcing religious organizations to pay for services against their religion, and I've coauthored a bill that guarantees religious people who participate in health care sharing ministries will receive the same tax deductions available to others. Whether it's guaranteeing religious organizations who provide adoption services can continue to do so within their beliefs or making sure the tax code is fair to people of all faiths, I will

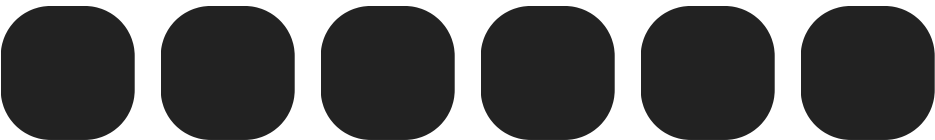
continue to support legislation that protects our individual freedom of faith.

Religious liberty means more than the freedom to worship where you want, our founding fathers intended it to mean the freedom to practice and live out your faith in all aspects of your life. President Trump and I share the view that when the federal government forces people to purchase or do things against their religion, it is a violation of our founding fathers’ intentions and the freedom our country was founded on. Defending our ‘first freedom’ against liberal organizations pushing the government to interject into religion will preserve America as a land where people can freely live their faiths.

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Congressman Jason Smith Holds Farmhall in Scott County

AUGUST 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith Holds Farmhall in Scott County

Oran, Missouri - Congressman Jason Smith (MO-08) held a farmhall with local Scott County farmers this week, taking questions and providing a legislative update on a variety of federal agriculture issues. This month Congressman Smith is meeting with farmers and ranchers all across southern Missouri to discuss the different challenges within the agriculture industry.

Congressman Smith provided the group a legislative update on the 2018 Farm Bill, his work to repeal the Obama-era Waters of the United States Rule, and President Trump's ongoing trade negotiations.

The crowd, many of whom were young farmers, expressed concerns about the ability to find and hire workers on their farms. Congressman Smith said the House-passed Farm Bill addresses this issue.

"Farmers know the value and pride in a hard day's work, but the federal government is incentivizing people to stay at home and collect from the government instead of getting to work. In two of the counties I represent, the biggest concern I've heard from farmers is how hard it is to find good help. As it turns out, those counties had the highest population of able-bodied people receiving government assistance. The Farm Bill we passed in the House includes commonsense work requirements for government aid," said Congressman Smith.

When asked about the ongoing trade discussions with China and the European Union, Congressman Smith stressed that the negotiations will take time and said he speaks with the White House weekly to share local farmers' concerns. Congressman Smith said President Trump has already given Missouri's ranchers one reason to celebrate and he's optimistic for more positive news.

"In 2009 the European Union set up a trade barrier where they would only accept 45,000 tons of American beef duty-free, anything more was subject to a tariff. In seven years, the U.S. went from providing 99% of the E.U. beef market to 33%. These are the trade barriers the President is working to eliminate, and after he negotiated with the E.U. they have agreed to adjust this quota to allow for more U.S. beef," said Congressman Smith.

Congressman Smith said the Chinese government has been taking advantage of the world for years, and President Trump is standing up to them.

“I have trust in the President to reach a better deal for America’s farmers,” said Congressman Smith. “I don’t trust the Chinese, who are targeting our farmers with these tariffs. There are two types of businesses in China: government owned, and government subsidized businesses. That’s tough to compete with as a farmer in southern Missouri. President Trump is doing the right thing and standing up to their unfair practices.”

Missouri Farm Bureau Southeast Regional Coordinator Matt Bain said Congressman Smith has been extremely helpful to local farmers.

“Scott County’s farmers could not have a better friend than Congressman Jason Smith,” said Bain.

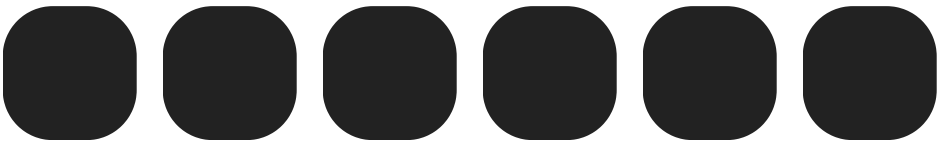
After the Congressman took questions and led a group discussion, younger farmers in attendance displayed how they use a drone to monitor crops and check for problem areas on the farm.

“We certainly didn’t use a drone on my family farm growing up,” said Congressman Smith.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Fighting for Warfighters

AUGUST 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Fighting for Warfighters

***Congressman Smith Capitol Report
Fighting for Warfighters
July 27, 2018***

Our grateful nation owes a massive debt of gratitude to the veterans who have fought to protect our country and its freedoms. As I accompanied President Trump this week on Air Force One for his fourth trip to Missouri since becoming president, I saw how devoted he is to fight on their behalf so every veteran receives the best possible treatment upon returning home. I spent some quality time with the president and saw his deep love for both the state of Missouri and the men and women who have served in uniform.

The scene inside the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Kansas City was electric. The VFW is the oldest major veterans organization in the country and thousands of men and women who served our country packed into the arena to hear the Commander in Chief speak. The president laid out the progress his administration is making domestically to better prepare our military and take care of our veterans and stated the incredible progress our military has made on the world stage eradicating ISIS. You could feel the raw emotion in the room as the president announced that as a direct result of his negotiations with North Korea, the United States has begun to recover the remains of soldiers who lost their lives in the Korean War. The families and brothers-in-arms of our fallen heroes have waited too long for this day, but they will finally be able to lay their loved ones to rest on American soil.

When our veterans were called to serve, they fought and won our wars. There were no empty promises, just responsibility to duty and love for country. Now it is our duty to answer their call to fix the VA and provide them what they need to adjust back into civilian life. President Trump and I aren't interested in empty words, we're committed to

producing concrete results to increase veterans' quality of life.

I was part of the team that sent a bill to President Trump's desk which gives the Veterans Affairs Secretary the ability to fire the bad actors who mistreat or neglect our veterans. Together we overhauled the VA Choice program, scrapping the 30-day and 40-mile distance requirements holding veterans back from receiving timely care outside of the VA. We expanded GI benefits, so veterans can seek higher education when it's the right time for them. Our troops put many aspects of their lives on hold for us when they serve; they don't need an arbitrary government time limit to receive an education.

Veterans, especially rural veterans, deserve access to quality care no matter where they live. Recently I worked on behalf of rural Missouri veterans to increase accessibility at the Salem VA clinic. I presented the VA medical director with petitions from 5,700 people who felt they were being underserved by the VA clinic only providing services two days a month. Today the clinic has expanded their staff and the services they offer to veterans.

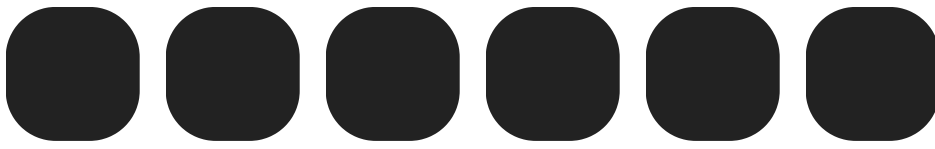
My flight to Kansas City with the president was our fourth trip to Missouri together since he was sworn in. One year ago, the president and I were in Springfield so I could show him how rural America would benefit from a simplified tax code. We stood together in St. Charles in November before Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the result of months of negotiations to cut taxes provide relief to working families and small businesses. In March we traveled to St. Louis, in the spirit of the Show Me State, to hear from businesses finding new life under an updated tax code. I was proud to be with the president in Kansas City at the VFW National Convention and see his respect for the brave men and women who defend our country and its flag, and I'll be with him as we honor our commitments to the veterans who have served this country.

The veterans of the United States are the reason our freedom is possible. They answered the call to serve when our nation needed them. President Trump and I are devoted to answering their call for better care from the government they risked everything to defend and protect.

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Rep. Smith Champions Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act

JULY 30TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Rep. Smith Champions Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act

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Missouri Representative introduces legislation to reduce Medicare red tape and improve access to home health therapy services

Washington, D.C. - This week U.S. Rep. Jason Smith (MO-Dist. 8) introduced the Medicare Home Health Flexibility Act (H.R. 6225), which will eliminate an unnecessary Medicare restriction and allow occupational therapists to open home health therapy cases. The Missouri Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) joined the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in thanking Rep. Smith for championing the bill which will eliminate home health scheduling delays and result in improved client access to therapy services.

“This bill would eliminate a Medicare restriction that is needlessly burdensome on patients and home health therapy providers,” said Rep. Smith. “It will increase access to care and doesn’t cost the government a penny.”

Smith represents a large district in Southern and Southeastern Missouri. He serves as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee that is reviewing proposals to reduce

Medicare red tape and increase access for Medicare patients.

“The bill will improve access for all home health clients in Missouri and nationwide by making a simple change that has wide support in the overall therapy community,” said Jacquelyn M. Sample, DrOT, M.Ed., OTR/L, President of MOTA. MOTA represents the approximately 5,300 occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants and students preparing to enter practice in Missouri.

“Therapists can drive 100-200 miles per day when serving clients in this part of Missouri, and current restrictions mean that home health therapy services are often delayed if the agency does not have a physical therapist or speech language pathologist available to initiate services on a given day,” said AOTA/MOTA member Rhonda Wolfe Hutsell, MSOT, OTR/L, CLT, and OT with Salem Memorial District Hospital in Salem, MO.

Occupational therapy has long been a valued component of home health care due to therapists’ expertise in identifying home safety issues and in establishing routines to maximize a client’s ability to follow his or her plan of care. This legislation recognizes those contributions and seeks to address the arbitrary restrictions currently in place.

Amy J. Lamb, OTD, OT/L, FAOTA, President of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), called the bill a “win-win” for beneficiaries, the health care system, and policy makers because it increases access to services for Medicare beneficiaries, increases efficiency, and is a valuable investment of financial resources to support independent living without increasing costs. “As baby boomers continue to age, so does the increased desire to age in place,” said Lamb. “Simultaneously, the evolving health care system emphasizes increasing quality and efficiency, and decreasing costs. As a result, more patients are receiving care in their home or community where occupational therapy has a pivotal role in facilitating participation and engagement in their everyday life, and enhancing quality of life while aging in place.”

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office’s analysis reported the bill would not increase any federal spending.

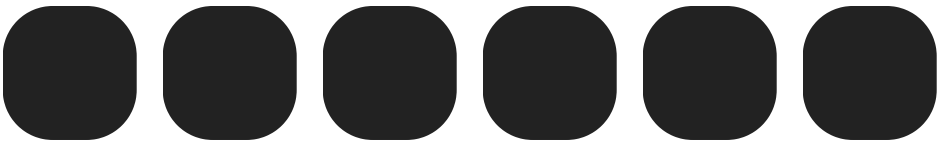
Founded in 1917, AOTA represents the professional interests and concerns of more than 213,000 occupational therapists, assistants, and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations, and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA’s major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring

consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, visit www.aota.org.

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Rep. Smith Passes Legislation to Protect Taxpayer Dollars, Rein in EPA

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Rep. Smith Passes Legislation to Protect Taxpayer Dollars, Rein in EPA

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House of Representatives passed Congressman Jason Smith’s (MO-08) legislation to protect taxpayer dollars and end the EPA practice known as ‘sue and settle’ Wednesday.

‘Sue and settle’ is the practice of environmental advocacy groups suing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in order to dictate the EPA’s regulation writing process. Instead of defending itself, the agency settles the lawsuit out of court in a closed-door agreement. Under current law, the legal fees of the outside organization in these settlements can be picked up by American taxpayers.

“When federal agencies settle lawsuits with outside advocacy groups behind closed doors, the outcome is costly new regulatory burdens with taxpayers picking up the tab,” said Congressman Smith. “It’s bad enough that the taxpayer ultimately pays for these regulations, but under current law it’s the taxpayer footing the bill for attorney fees. That is absurd.”

In the first term of the Obama administration, sue and settle agreements resulted in over 100 new regulatory actions burdening states, businesses, consumers, and local communities with more than \$1 billion in annual costs. Smith’s amendment restricts federal agencies from using American taxpayer dollars to pay for legal fees for settlements under the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

“My amendment prevents American taxpayer dollars from being used to pay the legal fees of outside advocacy groups for settlements. Organizations can sue whoever they want, but they cannot do it on the backs of taxpayers,” said Congressman Smith.

In October the Trump administration adopted Congressman Smith’s recommendation and stopped the ‘sue and settle’ practice, but current law does not prohibit future administrations from changing the policy.

“The American people are tired of an unaccountable federal government and we have the opportunity to do something about it. This is a necessary step to rein in over-regulation and bring transparency to the unelected bureaucracies,” said Congressman Smith.

This is the latest action by Congressman Smith to rein in the EPA and increase accountability in government bureaucracies.

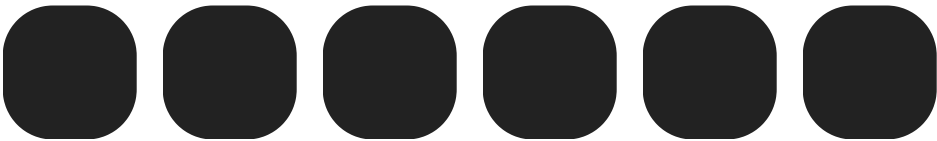
Congressman Smith has worked with the Trump administration to repeal the Obama administration EPA’s ‘Waters of the United States Rule,’ a massive power grab attempt to over-regulate and claim jurisdiction of every rain puddle on farmers’ fields.

In 2017 the House passed Congressman Smith’s Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome (SCRUB) Act. The SCRUB Act would require the government to identify and eliminate costly and unnecessary regulations still on the books, many of which were created by the EPA.

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