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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Congressional Challenge

AUGUST 20TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Congressional Challenge

Congressman Smith Capitol Report

A Congressional Challenge

August 17, 2018

As summer fades and fall begins, Missourians prepare to send their children back to school or off to college. Fall brings a fresh opportunity for new starts and the chance to be a little better than last year – whether it’s in the classroom, on the sports team, or in the local community. Many students in Missouri will soon be active in school programs and their communities, but aren’t aware they could receive special recognition from Congress for their achievements and everyday activities.

The Congressional Award, created in 1979, is the highest honor Congress presents to America’s youth. The program is tailored to grow a young person’s physical, emotional, and social health and teach the values of responsibility, trust, social skills, and planning and organizational skills. Instead of a competition, the Congressional Award is an individual challenge in personal growth open to all young people 14 to 24 years old regardless of backgrounds, abilities, or even grade point averages. The program doesn’t award previous accomplishments, it challenges young people to set personally challenging future goals within four program areas: voluntary public service, personal development, physical fitness, and expedition. They develop life skills and explore new fields, guided only by their personal interests and talents. And students are free to work at

their own pace as they progress through six levels of achievement – the only deadline is their 24th birthday.

Plenty of activities Missouri's young people do every day count for the four areas of the program. Most of the activities in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, KEY Club, 4-H, and other programs are often eligible for the Congressional Award. Volunteering at a local fire department or animal shelter, tutoring, and working on conservation projects are all qualifying and recommended community service activities to share their time and talents for the benefit of others. Playing on team sports or individual fitness activities qualify too – as long as they set physical fitness goals to improve their quality of life. Farming, woodworking, arts and crafts, religious study, and creative writing are all examples of personal development activities where students can strengthen their abilities and learn new skills. The last field, expedition, challenges students to explore unfamiliar environments. It can be something simple, like a canoe or camping trip, or traveling to a new town or historical park and learning the local history, as long as the young person is expanding their horizons.

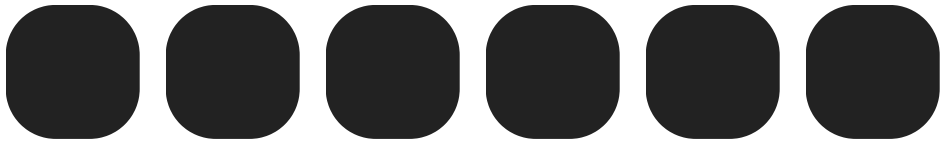
Currently 50,000 young people nationwide have enrolled in the Congressional Award program. Since the award's creation, participating individuals have contributed 8.5 million hours of public service and created a lasting impact in their communities. The Congressional Award is a great way to bolster college applications, resumes, and extra-curricular activities. In the long run it instills goal-setting habits, employment skills, civic engagement, and personal exploration in America's youth. Gold Medal recipients are invited to an award presentation every summer in Washington, D.C., but I also hold award presentations for winners here in southern Missouri.

For more activity ideas and information about the Congressional Award, please visit **www.CongressionalAward.gov**. If I or my office can help you through the process in any way, give me a call. You can find my closest office location and phone numbers at **www.JasonSmith.House.gov**.

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Congressman Jason Smith Visits Moreland Mule Farm in Dexter

AUGUST 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith Visits Moreland Mule Farm in Dexter

Dexter, Missouri - Congressman Jason Smith (MO-08) visited Moreland's Mules in Stoddard County Friday.

Congressman Smith discussed the unique challenges facing farmers and ranchers all across southern Missouri.

Dale Moreland, a retired Sergeant of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, provided a tour of his farm and presented the unique challenges of raising draft mules for competitions and shows. Mr. Moreland has been showing mules since 1987 and won Grand Champion Mule at the 2017 Missouri State Fair.

It's not every day you get to drive a mule, let alone a Missouri State Fair champion! I appreciate Dale and Carol Moreland sharing with me what sets Moreland's Mules apart and taking me for a ride on their mules Tom and Jerry.

Congressman Smith even got a chance to handle the reins and drive the mule team down a county road.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Freedom of Faith

AUGUST 10TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Freedom of Faith

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.

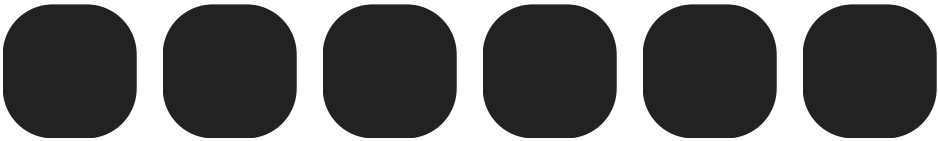
Veterans, especially rural veterans, deserve access to quality care no matter where they live. Recently I worked on behalf of rural Missouri veterans to increase accessibility at the Salem VA clinic. I presented the VA medical director with petitions from 5,700 people who felt they were being underserved 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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