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Kent Hampton's Capitol Report March 4, 2014

MARCH 05TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Kent Hampton's Capitol Report March 4, 2014

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

What I hope to say is the final winter storm of 2014, brought a smorgasbord of all ingredients; freezing rain, and sleet followed by snow. Folks took warning to stay in and off the roads, with the hope that their power would remain on. I appreciate all of our electrical crews out in the elements to ensure folks could stay warm during bitter cold.

This week in your Missouri House we approved HB 1268 by the Missouri House this week our state income tax brackets would be adjusted for the first time in decades. It may be hard to believe but Missouri's top income bracket has been set at \$9,000 for more than 80 years. While that was a good income at the time at the time it was set in 1931, today it is a figure that falls below the federal poverty level. If the rate had been adjusted for inflation over the years it would today check in at \$137,000. The difference means that most Missourians see the bulk of their income taxed at the top rate despite the fact that bracket was meant to apply to those who are wealthy.

The bill we passed this week would require our tax brackets to be adjusted each year for inflation beginning in 2015. While this wouldn't push our top bracket to where it would be had we done this all along, it will begin the process of moving our brackets in a direction that better reflects the current day income levels. This

is a change that would ultimately result in a reduced tax burden for low income Missourians. Our researchers estimate it could reduce the tax burden by as much as \$26 million when fully implemented.

The bill now heads to the House Senate for consideration. In the coming weeks we will see what our Senate colleagues think of this new approach to adjusting our tax brackets.

House Members Approve Voter ID Legislation (HJR 47 and HB 1073)

approved by the House this week generated a considerable amount of discussion and disagreement. The bills – one a proposed constitutional amendment and the other a statutory change – would put in place a requirement that voters must show photo identification before casting their ballots.

On one side of this issue you have proponents who say a photo ID requirement is the best way to protect and preserve the integrity of the voting process. They say the current system makes it too easy for fraudulent votes to be cast and that it is not too much to ask for voters to prove who they say they are at the polling place. Opponents of a voter ID requirement say there is no need for a change to the current system because there are no documented cases of voter fraud. They also say a photo ID requirement is nothing more than a way to disenfranchise voters who don't have the means to obtain identification.

This is a debate that has waged on for years as the legislature has revisited this topic numerous times. A voter ID bill was actually signed into law in 2006 but ultimately was struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court. This year's plan would first give voters the opportunity to change the Missouri Constitution to allow a system of voter identification before then putting it into place with the statutory change.

To remove some of the concerns of opponents, the bill also provides individuals without a government-issued photo ID with access to one free of charge. To prevent the requirement from being a barrier to those who cannot obtain an ID and those born before 1941 who may not have documentation such as a birth certificate, the bill would allow these Missourians to vote by provisional ballot. However, even with the provisions in place, opponents point to a statistic provided by the Missouri Secretary of State's office that estimates 220,000 people would not be able to vote if a photo identification requirement is put into place.

Going forward this will be an interesting issue to follow. A similar plan was approved by the House last year but ultimately died in the Senate. Already this year a Senate committee has considered similar legislation but the issue has yet to come to a vote.

HB 1092 also acted to approve legislation that would give investigators additional time to thoroughly review cases of child abuse. Right now our Children's Division has 30 calendar days to complete an investigation, which can involve numerous interviews and a large amount of review of testimony and paperwork. These are investigations we want to be conducted in a thorough manner to ensure any evidence of abuse or neglect is uncovered.

Because many of our investigators are overwhelmed with a high volume of cases, it makes sense to give them a few extra days that can mean the difference in uncovering all of the facts before a case is closed. The bill we passed would allow investigators to have 30 business days to complete their work. This small but important change could lead to investigators having as much as an additional week to investigate these cases. Hopefully these additional days will allow the state to better protect all of the young people who have been subjected to dangerous situations in the home.

Also this last week a shout out goes to the Clarkton Reindeer basketball team. Winners of the 1A district regional against the Risco Tigers. A great game between two good teams. I must compliment the spirit and sportsmanship displayed by both teams. Clarkton now moves to play its next game in Bloomfield.

Good luck, Reindeer's!

As always, it is an honor to serve you in the Missouri House. If you would like to discuss any issue, please call 573-751-3629. You can also email me at kent.hampton@house.mo.gov . I look forward to hearing from you.

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Jason Smith Files for Reelection

FEBRUARY 27TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith Files for Reelection

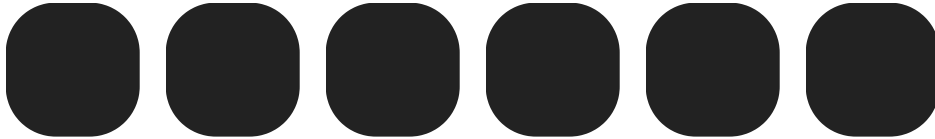
*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Jefferson City, Missouri - Today, February 25, 2014, Congressman Jason Smith filed to run for reelection to the United States House of Representatives from Missouri's Eighth Congressional District. Smith released the following statement after filing:

“It’s a great honor to represent my friends and neighbors in Missouri’s Eighth Congressional District in the halls of Congress. These past nine months I have fought the Obama Administration’s war on rural Missouri and I plan to keep up the fight. President Obama seems determined to regulate everything from how we generate power in rural Missouri to our ability to use rivers for Baptism services. I am committed to being a strong voice for a smaller, more efficient federal government, and an advocate for our region’s rural way of life.”

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Jason' Smith's Capitol Report - National FFA Week

FEBRUARY 17TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason' Smith's Capitol Report - National FFA Week

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

8th Congressional District - Missouri - Since its founding in 1928, the Future Farmers of America organization has brought together students, educators and private sector agriculture professionals to support agriculture education in schools across our country. Guiding the 580,000 FFA members in the United States is the FFA Mission of working: *To make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.*

The week of February 15-22 has been designated National FFA Week to celebrate the contributions made by the organization. In high school I served as a

chapter and area officer and I participated in numerous FFA competitions. Like many people raised in rural communities, FFA invigorated my passion for agriculture. I'm proud to say I still own my family's farm started four generations ago.

In rural communities, FFA prepares the next generation of leaders. The economy of our own Eighth Congressional District depends on agriculture and ag leaders from FFA. Starting in the Missouri Bootheel and following along the banks of the Mississippi River we grow everything from rice, cotton and soybeans to corn, milo and peanuts. In the western hills of our district farm families raise cattle, hogs and chickens. The central part of our district has a rich timber industry that supports numerous mills and small businesses. FFA prepares young people to lead our region's rural agriculture-based economy.

In FFA chapters throughout the country, students develop leadership skills that will last a lifetime. Additionally, FFA puts an emphasis on the global importance of agriculture and the always increasing role of technology in production. FFA seeks to strengthen student's confidence in public speaking. I remember my early days in FFA, I was so nervous speaking in front of a crowd that I could barely get through even the shortest speech.

In our Eighth Congressional District, agriculture drives the economy. For rural America to succeed, we must continue working with young people to expand agricultural knowledge and leadership skills. For me, and for thousands of young people across America, FFA is the foundation for lifelong skills that strengthen farming communities in rural America.

Jason Smith will be making a visit to the Dexter Senior High School on Tuesday, February 18th to meet the Future Farmers of American Club.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Sportsmen's Heritage Act

FEBRUARY 10TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Sportsmen's Heritage Act

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

8th Congressional District - Missouri - Hunting and fishing are a way of life for many in Missouri. For generations, families have come together to fish Missouri's streams and lakes. For my family, the beginning of hunting season is celebrated like a holiday. I grew up fishing on the Current River and Norfork and Clearwater Lakes.

To protect the rights of sportsmen, this week the House of Representatives passed The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act. The bill protects the ability of sportsmen to hunt and fish on many public lands.

In our district, The Sportsmen's Heritage Act will have a major economic impact. Our Eighth Congressional District is home to some of the best and most diverse hunting and fishing opportunities in the Show-Me State. Many small businesses in communities across our district cater to hunters and fishermen who visit our region. To protect our rural economies, I worked to include an amendment in The Sportsmen's Heritage Act that will ensure the National Park Service cannot

restrict motor vessels in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. My common sense amendment will ensure the federal government will not be a roadblock for families who responsibly hunt and fish.

The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act will keep public lands open for hunting and fishing. Specifically, the legislation includes measures to:

- * Require hunting, recreational shooting and fishing to be recognized activities on all Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management properties;
- * Protect recreational shooting in National Parks under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management;
- * Clarify that the Environmental Protection Agency does not have the right to regulate lead components found in either traditional ammunition or fishing tackle;
- * Protect law-abiding individuals' Constitutional right to bear arms on lands owned by the Army Corps of Engineers;
- * Ensure motor vessels cannot be further restricted in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

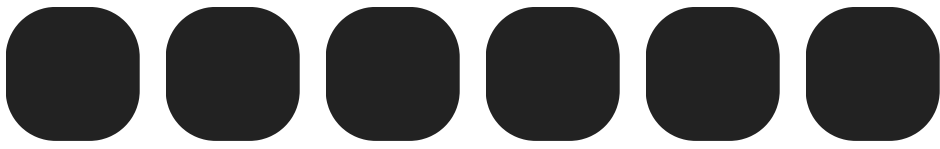
Congress would be wise to recognize the contributions that sportsmen make to protect our nation's resources. Hunting and fishing are a central part of Missouri's rural heritage and my experience has always been that people who live off the land are the best stewards of our natural resources.

The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act upholds generations of tradition. The bill also ensures that our rural economy will be protected from new regulations on hunters and fishermen. Families can continue to fish and hunt together and Missouri's abundant resources and natural beauty will continue to draw people to our state and fuel our rural economy.

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Kent Hampton's Capitol Report February 3, 2014

FEBRUARY 03RD 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Kent Hampton's Capitol Report February 3, 2014

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

By the time this is read, the groundhog will have seen his shadow, but remember his correct percentage is only 39%. The Superbowl will have been played and the winner crowned and judging of the best commercials associated with it and the half time show still being evaluated.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE:

Conscience Protection for Medical Workers (HB 1430)

The House Health Care Policy Committee heard testimony this week on a piece of legislation intended to protect health care workers who refuse to participate in procedures that violate their religious, moral or ethical beliefs. With the bill, physicians, nurses and medical researchers could refuse to participate in procedures and research that involve abortion, contraception and stem-cell research. It is legislation I support because it serves as a shield that would protect medical workers from being fired, suspended or demoted for refusing to participate in procedures they find to be objectionable. It's also important to note that the bill would not allow health care workers to withhold emergency medical

treatment needed to save the life of a patient.

House Committee Considers Bright Flight Expansion (HB 1308)

Also this week, the House Higher Education Committee listened to discussion on a bill that would make college more affordable for some of our state's best students and hopefully entice them to stay in Missouri rather than attend college in another state. The bill would improve the level of financial assistance received by our highest performing students by adding a forgivable loan program to our existing Bright Flight scholarship. The loan amount would be up to \$5,000 per academic year and would be forgiven on a year-for-year basis after graduation if the graduate stays and works in Missouri.

The goal with this idea is to keep our best and brightest here in Missouri both for school and for the workforce. Right now our Bright Flight scholarships award only \$2,500 to students who score in the top 3 percent of the ACT or SAT. While that was a significant amount years ago when this program was put in place, it is now just a small percentage of total tuitions costs and a minimal enticement for kids to stay in state for school. By bolstering the amount our best and brightest can receive we hope they will be more inclined to say no to out-of-state institutions and receive their education right here in Missouri.

Propane Price Investigation

It's during this time of the year when the bitter cold persists and we do our best to stay warm that many Missourians dread receiving their utility bill. This is especially true for the many people who heat their homes with propane. In the span of a week propane prices tripled to in excess of more than \$5 per gallon. This dramatic and sudden rise in pricing has caused both House and Senate members to call for an immediate investigation to determine if the gas industry is engaging in price gouging.

Already our Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster has announced that he is launching an investigation. His office is coordinating with nine other Midwestern states to get to the root of this problem. In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation has issued emergency declarations to allow more propane to be shipped to our state. The hope is that the additional propane will help drive down some of these exceedingly high prices.

For anyone who uses propane this has been an extremely tough time. Please know that your state legislature will continue to stay involved in this issue until we

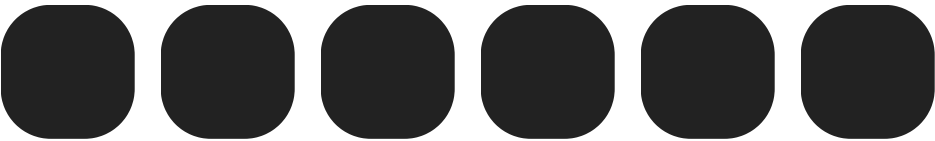
reach a resolution that protects Missourians and helps them to afford the price of providing heat for their home or for their livestock.

As always, it is an honor to serve you in the Missouri House. If you would like to discuss any issue, please call 573-751-3629. You can also email me at kent.hampton@house.mo.gov . I look forward to hearing from you.

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