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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Summer Tourism

JUNE 09TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by
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8th Congressional District, Missouri - With the summer season now upon us many families are enjoying the outdoors. We are blessed to have tremendous recreation opportunities in the Eighth Congressional District that are enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. As you think about planning a family vacation or weekend outing, I would encourage you to consider some of the local businesses and parks we have right here in South Central and Southeast Missouri.

This week I spent time visiting tourist attractions in our region. Tourism in Missouri provides us with new adventures close to home, but it also helps fuel our state's economy. The tourism industry provides more than 280,000 tourism-related jobs and generates nearly \$11 billion in tourism-related spending. Visitors to our state spend money on lodging and at restaurants, outdoor recreation facilities, gas stations and small retail businesses. These dollars mean jobs for our friends and neighbors, and are important tax revenues for our municipal and county governments.

During my travels this week visiting tourism sites in our Eighth Congressional District, I met great people who work diligently to show visitors Missouri hospitality. In Ste. Genevieve, I stepped back in time while visiting historic

attractions in the 18th century French colony. Ste. Genevieve is home to internationally recognized historic homes, and a beautiful downtown historic district. I visited an old time pharmacy in Ava where you can still get an ice cream cone for 10 cents. In Sikeston I toured and dined at the original home of the famous 'Thrown Rolls.' In rural Ozark County I had a hardy breakfast at Dawt Mill and took in the natural beauty of the North Fork of the White River. In Mansfield I visited the home of Laura Ingalls Wilder and learned about her life experiences which inspired her book, Little House on the Prairie that eventually became a successful television series.

In addition to historic sites, I visited our pristine state and national parks and small businesses that rely on the rivers. In Wayne County I visited the Bill Emerson Visitor Center at Lake Wappapello. Further north in Iron County I toured Elephant Rocks State Park where I saw the giant granite boulders that resemble elephants. At Johnson Shut-Ins State Park I saw great places to swim, nice picnic areas and the beautiful Ozark landscape. I spent time on the Current River near Round Spring to learn about the small businesses that provide goods and services to visitors. Along the way I heard from business owners and private citizens who are concerned about new management plans in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways and how these changes will impact their communities. I will continue fighting any efforts to limit access to our federal lands.

When you are planning a trip or activity this summer, remember the great local tourist attractions our region has to offer. By staying local this summer you can enjoy less time traveling and know that your dollars are supporting small businesses in our local communities. Whether you like to camp, fish, be on the water or visit unique restaurants and businesses, our Eighth Congressional District has something to offer for everyone.

LAST UPDATED ON JUNE 09TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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