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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Missouri Veterans

JUNE 16TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Missouri Veterans

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

8th Congressional District, Missouri - America's veterans bravely put themselves in harm's way to defend our freedoms. Once our veterans return home they should never have to worry about receiving the benefits they have earned. This week the Department of Veterans Affairs released an audit detailing alarming numbers of American veterans who are not receiving the care they have so fully earned. As your representative in the United States House of Representatives, I am working every day to ensure our veterans and their wellbeing is a priority.

The audit released this week proves that problems with the VA go well beyond a patient backlog. According to the audit, 57,000 veterans have been waiting more than 90 days for their first VA appointment. Worse yet, the audit found that 64,000 veterans have fallen through the cracks completely and never received an appointment with a VA doctor after requesting one. This is a national disgrace and our veterans deserve better. The audit also found that some VA schedulers were told by their superiors to falsify appointment schedules to make patient wait times appear shorter. This is unacceptable.

The men and women who have served in our military deserve more from the VA. Veterans who have defended our freedoms and values at home and abroad

should be not forced to wait for months to see a doctor. If any veteran in the Eighth District is having a problem with the VA, I encourage them to contact one of my district offices so we can help. My staff and I work every day to ensure our veterans get the care they have earned and deserve.

This week the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill that I sponsored, the Veterans Access to Care Act which will give veterans who are forced to wait for VA healthcare access to private care providers. This common sense legislation is long overdue. The Veterans Access to Care Act would require the VA to offer private healthcare services to any veteran who cannot get an appointment within VA wait time goals - currently 14 days - or who lives more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility. Additionally, the bill would ban bonuses for all VA employees through 2016. Bureaucrats at the VA should not be getting financial bonuses while veterans are being forced to wait months to see a doctor.

The Department of Veterans Affairs needs real reforms. While the Veterans Access to Care Act will not fix all that is broken within the VA, it is an important first step to make healthcare accessible for America's veterans. No one who served our nation in uniform should have to worry about waiting months to see a doctor. I will continue working in the House of Representatives to keep the promises made to our veterans and honor their service to our nation. We must always honor the sacrifices of our military members.

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Gov. Orders Flags at Half-Mast for Matt Walker

JUNE 14TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Gov. Orders Flags at Half-Mast for Matt Walker

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Missouri - Gov. Jay Nixon has ordered that the U.S. and Missouri flags at state buildings in all 114 counties and the City of St. Louis be flown at half-staff on June 16 to honor the bravery and sacrifice of Specialist Matthew H. Walker. Specialist Walker, age 20, of Hillsboro, was a soldier in the United States Army serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. He died on June 5 while serving his country in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

In addition, Gov. Nixon has ordered that the U.S. and Missouri flags at all state buildings in Jefferson County be flown at half-staff from June 17 to June 22.

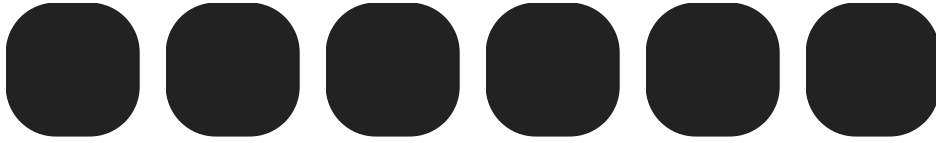
“We mourn the loss of this brave American soldier in defending our country and our freedoms,” Gov. Nixon said. “I ask that Missourians remember and honor the sacrifice of Specialist Walker when they see the lowered flags.”

Specialist Walker was assigned to the B Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman Badge, Air Assault Badge, Combat and Special Skill Badge Basis Marksmanship Qualification Badge (Bar, Weapon: Rifle (Inscription: Rifle), Expert), and the Overseas Service Bar.

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Amendment 7 Is on the Ballot for August Election

JUNE 14TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Amendment 7 Is on the Ballot for August Election

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Missouri - After years of work by local planning agencies and transportation partners, Missourians are now asked to weigh in on a list of transportation projects and improvements that could improve safety, create jobs, and boost Missouri's economy.

Starting on **June 13**, the complete draft list of projects and priorities as outlined in the Constitutional **Amendment 7** legislation will be released by the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission. The list, a schedule of open house meetings, and an online comment form will be available at www.modot.org/movingforward.

At their meeting on June 11, the commission heard MoDOT's progress report on the creation of the list and decided to expand the public comment period.

"There will be hundreds of projects on this list, affecting every type of transportation - from roads and bridges to transit, ports, airports, and bike-ped facilities," said

Commission Chair Stephen Miller. "We want to make certain Missourians have the opportunity to let us know if they believe these are the projects that would have the biggest impact for their communities and the state."

MoDOT is also holding open house public meetings in every region of the state so Missourians can talk face-to-face with the department and the regional planning partners who helped create the list.

The public comment period now extends through 5 p.m. on July 3, and the Commission will review all public comment and approve the list on July 9.

On August 5, Missouri voters will decide on Amendment 7, a ballot measure to temporarily raise Missouri's sales tax by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cent. All proceeds from the tax would go toward much-needed transportation improvements across the state. The amendment's provisions include the creation of a project list prior to the election so Missourians can see what their tax dollars would fund.

For more information, visit www.modot.org/movingforward or contact MoDOT's customer service center at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636).

1. **Reduce Deaths:** Missouri has around 800 transportation deaths every year: Amendment 7 will provide the funding need to improve our transportation system and drive this number down.
2. **All Modes:** By law, existing Missouri gasoline tax revenues must be spent on road and bridges. Amendment 7 funding will also support walking, biking, mass transit, ports, and airports.
3. **Economic Development.** A world class Missouri, competing in world economic markets, needs and deserves a world class transportation system.
4. **Comprehensive.** Amendment 7 monies would fund transportation projects across the state; from suburban communities, to agricultural markets, to high-tech corridors. Every region will prioritize the projects to meet the direct transportation needs of residents and businesses in their communities.
5. **Accountable.** Amendment 7 sunsets in 10 years, unless renewed by Missouri voters. Fuel taxes will not increase and toll roads will not be implemented over the 10-year time period.
6. **Targeted.** Amendment 7 will fund projects from a predefined list. Missouri voters will know ahead of time what they are paying for.

7. **Transparent.** The Amendment 7 project list is being developed with input from local leadership and residents from across the state.
8. **Efficient.** MoDOT runs one of the most efficient DOTs in the country. All funds will go to good use.
9. **1992.** It has been over 20 years since Missouri last raised the gasoline tax. It's time.
10. **Needed.** Missouri cannot afford to not support Amendment 7.

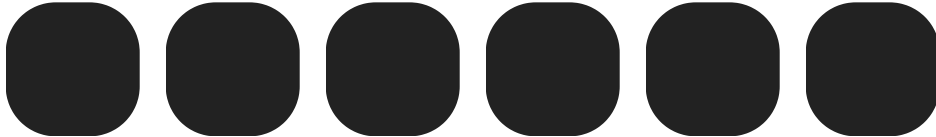
Find out more at:

<http://www.modot.org/movingforward/>

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Kent Hampton's Capitol Report - Father's Day

JUNE 10TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Jefferson City, Missouri - This coming Sunday is a very important day is most people's lives. Father's Day is a day that we celebrate the men in our lives that have made a huge impact. They don't have to be our fathers; many celebrate uncles, grandfathers, etc., any man who has made a significant impact on our lives. Father's Day started in 1908 in the state of Washington. It was celebrated on the third Sunday in June, because others in states like Virginia didn't have the appropriate time to get ready for the June 5th celebration in Washington. That is why Father's Day is still celebrated on the 3rd Sunday in June. This holiday was not official until 1972 when a Congressional Act officially recognized the 3rd Sunday as the date. This week tell all the men in your lives thank you for the great job that they have done in your life, whether you are a kid, parent or grandparent enjoy the day!

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's Capitol Report - Summer Tourism

JUNE 09TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Summer Tourism

*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

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 'Throwned 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.

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