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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, April 1, 2016

APRIL 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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I don't have the typical pedigree for a Congressman, my father was an auto mechanic and a preacher, my mother was a factory worker. As a teenager, I remember visiting my grandparents for the holidays and having to go outside to pump water out of the cistern which had collected rain water from the roof just to have fresh water. However, I learned firsthand the disciplined work ethic needed to be successful and put myself through college, becoming the first college graduate in my family.

I understand how hard it can be to escape the cycle of poverty, especially in southcentral and southeast Missouri. 1 in 5 people living in Missouri's 8th Congressional district struggle with poverty every day. In 2010, of the 30 counties in our congressional district, 20 had less than half of the number of adults gainfully employed.

The typical answers in Washington have been disheartening – more money, more programs, less results. Instead of creating incentives for people to work hard to get themselves out of poverty, of the over 80 different government programs established to combat poverty, we spend over \$1 trillion each year with no improvements in this country's overall poverty rate. We would be better off just writing a check for \$22,000 to each of the 46 million people living in poverty in this country. Rather what your government has created is what is actually known as the "poverty trap".

The Poverty Trap is any self-reinforcing mechanism which causes poverty to persist. In this country today, for far too many people stuck in poverty, it does not pay to get ahead. Federal government poverty programs are actually creating incentives for people not to

work.

The people who have the highest marginal tax rates in this country are not the super wealthy. Instead it's single mothers who struggle to make ends meet and rely on certain government programs for assistance. Under our current support model, if those mothers accept a pay raise from their employer, they actually lose more money than they gain since their reported income will go up and they will no longer be eligible for certain federal support. Where is the incentive to fight for that raise? We have created disincentives to work. People want to work. People want to contribute to their communities. We have to restructure our programs to encourage work, not discourage folks from taking raises for fear of losing benefits.

Speaker Ryan engaged the House of Representatives to become the House of Ideas. That's why I've taken a leadership role both on the Ways and Means Committee on Human Resources and on the newly created Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity and Upward Mobility. Our mission is to work together to strengthen America's social safety net to better help those in need; improve education and training so more can succeed in today's economy; help welfare recipients enter, reenter, and remain in the workforce; and empower everyone to live their own American Dream. As the task force and the Committee continue to work together, we will present bold conservative solutions to reduce poverty by helping people move from welfare to work.

In the words of President Ronald Reagan "We should measure welfare's success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many people are added." I will continue to keep poverty reform as one of my top priorities in Congress, because I know that the only real way to solve poverty is to show people a path that encourages them to support themselves and their families. Ultimately, people need a hand up, not a hand out.

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