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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, April 8, 2016

APRIL 11TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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“On the Road Again...” April 8th, 2016

To be successful in your job, it is important to set goals for yourself. For me, those goals are best set by interacting with and listening to the needs, obstacles and struggles of the folks in south central and southeast Missouri. District work periods provide me with that unique opportunity to be home for an extended period time and visit with the businesses, farmers and families I am honored to represent.

46 different events, stops in all 30 counties of Missouri’s 8th Congressional district and over 3,100 miles traveled is how I have spent my past two weeks – to put in perspective that is further than driving from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles. The best way to be an effective representative is through hearing first-hand accounts and stories from residents, community leaders, and small business owners of the different struggles they are facing. This is why I held 8 town-hall meet and greets over the last 2 weeks, hosted 2 - first of their kind Veterans Benefits’ Summits, spoke to numerous local leaders, and visited close to 10 schools.

At one event in Doniphan the line of people wrapped around the block. The community meeting we held there was a great opportunity for me to hear directly from residents about the different issues they are confronting daily and what they care most about. I will carry the messages from that meetings back to the

bureaucrats in Washington who have never set foot in south central or southeast Missouri. Turnout like that is exactly why these district work weeks have become some of my favorite opportunities to engage with folks and revisit some of my favorite places.

The two Veterans Benefits Summits we hosted were among some of the most rewarding events of the past couple weeks. There are roughly 60,000 veterans in south central and southeast Missouri and assisting those veterans in navigating an often cumbersome and confusing federal process accounts for roughly half of all the casework assistance my office provides each year. These two Summits, hosted in Cape Girardeau and Kennett, were the first of their kind in our district. These Summits were aimed at providing better access and better assistance to the veterans in our area for a variety of issues – making sure our nation’s veterans are taken care of is a very important priority to me and many of the folks in district. The Summits provided a great opportunity for veterans and their families to come to a single location and make contact with all of the federal, state and local agencies and services available to them.

As a 7th generation Missourian, I have a deep passion for serving the folks in the same communities that I grew up. These past two weeks have been a great opportunity to spend time with friends, families and community leaders back home. It will be a difficult plane ride to Washington next week, however seeing so many of the great people in our district over this work period gives me renewed energy to keep fighting for the values, morals and way of life that so many of us enjoy.

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 11TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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