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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, May 20, 2016

MAY 20TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Heroes Dressed in Blue May 20, 2016

This week thousands of law enforcement officers from around the country came to Washington, DC to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. As part of the memorial ceremonies, 252 names will be added to the **National Law Enforcement Memorial Wall** and among them three officers from Missouri killed in the line of duty last year.

Tragic events are something that stick with many of us, they mark our lives, and recall memories that we struggle with. Yet, often our law enforcement officers and first responders are individuals who put themselves in those positions to protect us and keep us safe. One of the most profound memories I have was from December of 2002, when Chief Deputy Joann Barnes of the Dent County Sheriff's Department was fatally shot as she approached the scene of a double murder investigation. Joann's murder rocked my hometown community. A lot of people knew Joann, we also knew she wasn't someone that needed the job, but she was proud of her community and committed to service and her absence was going to be profound.

More recently, our community was witness to another heart-wrenching event, that also highlighted the heroism of our men and women in blue. Police Lieutenant Brad Smith and Corporal Cary Dunavan were called to the scene of a car

accident in Cape Girardeau where a couple, including a pregnant woman, were ejected from their vehicle. Without hesitation, both officers raced to the scene of the accident to try and save the victim's lives. Tragically, the pregnant mother did not survive the crash, but thanks to the actions of these officers who performed CPR until the paramedics arrived doctors were later able to save the life of the unborn child. Time and again, in the eyes of danger and disaster our law enforcement officials wade right in to harm's way to keep us safe and bring stability to crisis. They do this with their own families often waiting anxiously at home.

We also know that for a police officer "off-duty" does not really exist because their training and commitment is always ready to be called to service. That is one of the reasons we passed legislation last week to make it easier for off-duty officers to carry their firearms. It is of utmost importance that those who protect our communities are also protected so that they can do their jobs, even if we never need or call upon them.

This week is not only a tribute to those in law enforcement who go to work every day to protect our communities, but also a time to remember those who never returned home. It is a time to remember the people like Joann Barnes or be grateful for the service of Lieutenant Smith and Corporal Dunavan. We never know when tragedy or crisis may hit, but we are fortunate that we have people who are ready to answer our call in a moment's notice.

Please take the time this week to thank a law enforcement officer in your community for putting their lives on the line, reminding us to do the right thing, or protecting and keeping us safe even when we aren't expecting it.

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