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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, June 10, 2016

JUNE 15TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Wrappers and Reductions June 10, 2016

We all have those moments that stick with us, maybe it was an achievement, a tragedy, overcoming a fear, or coming to a realization. I had one of those moments 36 months ago when a big number was staring me in the face. It was 285, and it was the one looking back at me from the bathroom scale. Month after month of traveling hundreds of miles every day all across Missouri's 8th Congressional district while running in the Special Election, I was the opposite of a picture of health. The floor of my car was covered with wrappers from Casey's, Mobile or Rhodes 101 and unfortunately represented recent "meals".

My struggles with my weight are something I openly talk about because while humbling it makes me acknowledge it and proactively think about my eating choices.

However, what struck me that day was a simple question, how could I pledge to take the fight to defend rural America all the way to Congress if I couldn't even walk up the steps of the U.S. Capitol without becoming out of breath? Since winning that election 36 months ago to represent the people of southeast and south central Missouri before the U.S. Congress, I am proud to say I have lost over 75 pounds. Well in actuality, over 250 pounds - that last 10 just seems to keep falling off and getting added back each week when I step on the scale! It's a fight each and every day. We all have our vices - mine just comes in the form of feel good comfort food made to perfection in this part of the country that gives me an excuse to sit with family and friends or cope with stress.

June represents Men's health month. It is a month dedicated to recognizing that us guys need to put our pride aside and get the necessary screenings, checkups and education to ensure we are taking the most proactive steps possible to be in control of our own health and our own lives. We owe it to more than just ourselves though, our families and loved ones deserve that dedication from us as well. This is especially true because medical journal after medical journal has published results that show being overweight can lead to so many other health problems. Most notably, being overweight greatly increases your chances of heart disease, which is the number one killer in America, or things like diabetes, stroke, and even some forms of cancer. Further, we know early detection and education are the best ways to put an end to so many preventable chronic diseases which are driving up the overall costs of healthcare in this country.

For me, the wake-up to turn things around was that day when I recognized if I was going to ask people to expect the best from me, I had to be in a position to give the best to them. The catalyst however, was a New Year's resolution at the start of 2014. Those closest to me, those who cared about me, challenged me to reverse the health course I was on. They also knew the best way to get me focused and committed was to tell me they doubted I had it in me to get serious. That was all I needed because like so many things, telling me something isn't possible is exactly what drives me to make it happen. Now, I find myself in group exercise classes every morning, which not only help keep my waistline down, but help clear my head, and meet new colleagues. Even though I am a young conservative member from rural Missouri, it is amazing the respect people have shown me because they know my dedication to fight for an issue starts with a dedication to face my own personal challenges.

There are so many things we are working towards as a nation – things to turn our economy around, rolling back the federal government's encroachment into all of our lives and advancing a common sense conservative agenda that puts the people, not Washington, in control of their lives. I want to be around to see the impact of these changes and I want to help lead that charge, but I'm never going to be able to do that for our district if I can't march up those stairs.

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