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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Favorite Tradition

JULY 22ND 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report

A Favorite Tradition

July 22, 2016

Next week marks the start of one of my favorite annual traditions, the 8th Congressional District Farm Tour. In southeast and south central Missouri we know agriculture is at the heart of not only our economy, but our communities, and our families. The early mornings, late days, and stress associated with mother nature and volatile markets are something everyone is familiar with. But, that way of life also brings many of us together, it helps strengthen the bond of our communities, and teaches the next generation the value of hard work, perseverance and kindness.

These are the same traits handed down to me through seven generations of our family, all of which have called this area home, and it still resides in the amazing people I am honored to meet during this special tradition.

This coming week, I look forward to beginning my 4th annual Farm Tour which will take me nearly 3,000 miles crisscrossing across all 30 counties of Missouri's 8th Congressional District. It will also encompass over 40 stops and provide a valuable opportunity to hear about issues folks are facing firsthand. These folks and families are a vital part of our state's number one industry, but they are also unique in their contribution to the broad range of agriculture products we produce. In fact, Missouri's 8th

Congressional District is one of the most diverse agriculture districts in the country, and that is going to be one of our highlights this year.

As an example, most people are probably familiar with the soybeans, rice, cotton, and corn grown in our district, but we also grow peanuts, process honey, and harvest timber. We are also really proud of the quality of our beef and pork, but our region also has several trout and fish farms as well breeders of pheasant and quail for hunting. And, while most of us think about farming especially when we gather at the dinner table there are a number of other industries that play a key role in manufacturing these products. For instance, we have a number of cotton gins and mills to process raw materials, but also biodiesel facilities and a chemical manufacturer that produces environmentally friendly catalysts for spraying applications. Not to mention several companies that uniquely specialize in aerial spraying themselves. Missouri's wine industry is also taking off and some of the most popular destinations are here in Missouri's 8th District, both on the east and west ends of the district.

There is so much to be proud of and I am excited to get a closer look at these operations and meet the families behind them over the next two weeks.

There are over 19,000 farms in our district and over 29,000 hardworking folks who tirelessly keep those farms operating for the people not only in Missouri, but across the nation. Agriculture is the backbone of our district and the state of Missouri and I am a firm believer it is what is going to lead us into the future as well. I sincerely look forward to traveling southeast and south central Missouri to listen to the concerns of all of the hardworking folks who make the agriculture industry possible. Often each of them is carrying on the practices within their own family, others are innovators using the values they have learned to create their own opportunity, and for me the experience of meeting and learning from these folks has become very special – traditions we all hope to carry on.

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