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# Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, August 26, 2016

AUGUST 30TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, August 26, 2016

## **Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report The Future of Welfare Reform August 26th, 2016**

This week marks the 20th anniversary of “welfare reform” and at the time it was hailed as one of the most widespread changes to addressing federal poverty our nation had ever seen. They promised it was the end of welfare as we would know it. While this reform 20 years ago did help some people escape poverty, it is clear we have an entirely new round of obstacles that are placing more Americans into the poverty trap.

Moving people from welfare to work is the only way to successfully and sustainably lift someone out of poverty. From 1995 through 2007, 1.5 million single mothers moved from welfare to work, lowering the number of children trapped in poverty as well. This not only provided personal financial independence to families, but showed their next generation a path forward. Incentives that offer jobs to those trapped in poverty do work. In fact, the amount of people receiving assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has decreased by over 60 percent since 1996. That translates to a decrease of over 10 million people who rely on government welfare assistance today.

The bad news is that the welfare reform 20 years ago was narrowly focused to apply to

only a few programs and did not apply to all government welfare and anti-poverty support programs. Therefore today our country has upwards of 46 million Americans still marred in poverty. In fact, almost two out of three working age adults who are living in poverty today do not have a job. This is a direct result of a current welfare system that does not encourage or reward work. Sadly, many trapped in poverty today have more of an incentive to stay on government assistance instead of going out and getting a job to move out of poverty.

As a result, House Republicans are proposing a new plan to combat the cycle of poverty in this country. Growing up in rural Missouri, I know first-hand that the current welfare system is broken. I remember well the trailer my family lived in when I was younger and pumping water from a cistern at my grandparents in order to get our fresh water. I understand just how hard it can be to escape the cycle of poverty, especially in south central and southeast Missouri.

I have taken a leadership role in helping reform our current welfare support system both on the Ways and Means Committee, the Human Resources Subcommittee, and on the newly created Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity and Upward Mobility. My goal is to help people who are struggling not only back home in Missouri, but across the nation escape the cycle of poverty by offering incentives for people to work to pull themselves out of poverty. It is also important to me that people understand the difference between the urban poverty they often read about in newspapers and the rural poverty that effects areas all over the country like ours. With over 46 million people living in poverty today, reforming the welfare system is a top priority in this country. We cannot continue to spend close to \$1 trillion each year on so called welfare reducing government programs without seeing any improvements to the overall poverty rate.

I continue to remain committed to working with my Republican and Democrat colleagues to move forward on a better way plan to reduce poverty and give everyone the opportunity to realize the American dream. Very soon I hope we will be able to usher in the next era of welfare reform that also kicks off the greatest resurgence in an American economic recovery and demonstrates American success and generosity, but also shows the importance of personal freedom and responsibility, as the cornerstone of our great Republic.

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## Senator Blunt to Stop in Dexter

AUGUST 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Senator Blunt to Stop in Dexter

**Southeast Missouri** - U.S. Senator Roy Blunt will be making stops and visiting with folks in the 25th District on Tuesday, August 30th in Dexter, Sikeston, and Charleston.

#### His schedule is below:

##### **Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 9:00 AM**

Rice Trailers

166 Highway V

Harviell, Missouri

(Plant location is approximately 9 miles south of Poplar Bluff) at Junction of Hwy 67 & Hwy 160W

##### **Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 10:30 AM**

The Mule Barn

15080 State Highway F

Dexter, Missouri

**Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 1:15 PM**

Dewitt Company

River Birch Mall, 905 South Kingshighway

Sikeston, Missouri

**Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 2:30 PM**

Delta New Holland

975 South Highway 105

Charleston, Missouri

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## Gov. Nixon Grants Seven Pardons

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AUGUST 22ND 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Gov. Nixon Grants Seven Pardons

**Jefferson City, Missouri - Gov. Jay Nixon** today announced that he has granted pardons to six men and one woman, each of whom has completed his or her sentence and has become a law-abiding citizen.

“The executive power to grant clemency is one I take with a great deal of consideration and seriousness,” **Gov. Nixon** said. “In each of these cases warranting a pardon, the individual has demonstrated the ability and willingness to be a contributing member of society.”

Those granted pardons are:

- Patricia Lane, who was placed on five years’ probation after being convicted in Audrain County in 1988 of two counts of passing bad checks. She received an early discharge from probation and has not been charged with any other crimes. Lane is currently employed by the Missouri Department of Corrections.
- Jackie Vent, who was given a two-year term of probation after being convicted of possession of over 35 grams of marijuana in New Madrid County in 1980. Vent received an early discharge from probation and has not been charged with any other crimes since that time. He has served as a pastor at a church in Tulsa, Okla., for the past 34 years.
- James Hardin, who received a one-year term of unsupervised probation after being convicted of stealing in Jasper County in 2007. He paid restitution for the stolen merchandise and has not been charged with any other crimes since successfully completing probation. Hardin has been gainfully employed since being discharged from probation.
- William Harrison, who pleaded guilty to a charge of passing a bad check in Franklin County in 1993. He paid full restitution and was given a five-year term of probation, which he successfully completed. Harrison was gainfully employed after completing probation and has not been charged with any other crimes.
- Leroy Kerns, who pleaded guilty to unlawful use of drug paraphernalia in Vernon County in 2004. He successfully completed a two-year term of probation and has been gainfully employed since that time.
- Jerry Simpson, who pleaded guilty to stealing in Stoddard County in 1985. Simpson successfully completed a two-year term of probation and has not been charged with any other crimes. He was employed for many years as a maintenance employee.
- Earnest Leap, who entered an Alford plea to a charge of sexual abuse in 1992 in Jackson County. Leap successfully completed a three-year term of probation and has not been charged with any other crime since then. The person named as the victim, who is now an adult, has since told authorities that the incident did not happen.

“In the case of Earnest Leap, the information that has come to light more recently and the fact that he has been a law-abiding and productive member of society were compelling enough for me to grant a pardon,” **Gov. Nixon** said.

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## Two Local Educators Appointed to MO State Council

AUGUST 17TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Two Local Educators Appointed to MO State Council

**Congressman Jason Smith Names Appointees to Congressional Award Council  
Smith Appoints two local educators to the Missouri State Council for the  
Congressional Award**

**Cape Girardeau, Missouri** - Congressman Jason Smith has named two educators from the 8th Congressional District to represent him on the Missouri State Council for the Congressional Award. Jennifer Woods, principal of South Iron Elementary School and Scott Dill, superintendent of Poplar Bluff Schools, will offer their input in the process of recruiting candidates for the Congressional Award.

"The Congressional Award is the highest award Congress can give to a young person," explained Smith. "I am delighted to have these two dedicated community members representing me on the Missouri Council. The commitment and successes Jennifer and

Scott have made in improving the lives of the thousands of students they have had the opportunity to work with and better is truly remarkable. I am honored that in addition to their current positions, they are willing to continue those efforts through additional means such as the Congressional Award program."

Youth between the ages of 14 and 23 are eligible to register for the awards program. They commit to achieve the required hours of community service and to set and accomplish goals of personal growth, exploration and physical fitness. Based upon the achievements, bronze, silver and gold medals are awarded. To register, go to **[www.jasonsmith.house.gov](http://www.jasonsmith.house.gov)**.

**Candidates** select an adult mentor to help them and keep a scrapbook of their journey.

"Students who plan to take part in the A-plus program, become Eagle Scouts, participate in FFA, Future Business Leaders of America or the National Honor Society will already be on track to do what the Congressional Award program requires," said Smith. "However it is open to all students interested in bettering themselves and their communities and serves as the official way Congress can celebrate the commitment and time these students put forth."

Candidates pledge to give hours of community service such as volunteering at a homeless shelter or mentor a younger student. Additionally, they may also pledge to improve their physical fitness by taking part in a program of exercise or develop a project of personal exploration, such as specialized study of a specific topic or taking a trip to learn about another culture. Overall the purpose of the program is to foster personal development by setting goals and discovering new talents and abilities.

"They're involved in their own personal growth and achievement, but also involved in what goes on in their schools and their communities," said Dill, who is beginning his 20th year in education. "I would think this kind of award would open doors for these students."

Dill is beginning his first year in Poplar Bluff after serving as superintendent for nine years in Houston, Mo.

"This is a wonderful way to encourage our youth to challenge themselves and award their efforts," said Woods. "The earlier the students become aware of the award, the better the chance they'll be able to do all that's required to achieve it."

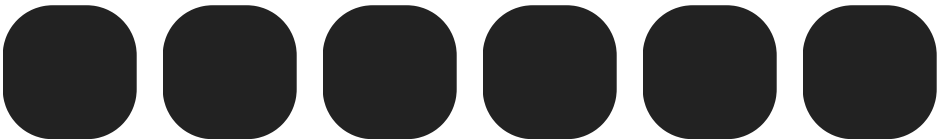
There are 50,000 young people throughout the nation working toward the Congressional

Award. All 8th district medals will be awarded by Congressman Smith at a state or local ceremony. Gold medalists are invited to Washington D.C. for another ceremony that honors their achievements.

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# Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, August 5, 2016

AUGUST 06TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, August 5, 2016

The Importance of Voting

This week many Missourians chose to exercise one of their most important rights by heading to the polls to vote in the August primary. Men and women from all over the state participated in the elections process to help determine who will represent them in the halls



of government. By casting their votes, they were able to make their voices heard to help determine the path the state of Missouri will take heading into the future.

While approximately 1 million Missourians took the time to cast their votes, the 2016 primary also underscores the fact that many more Missourians continue to choose not to exercise their right to vote. Missouri typically sees voter turnout in the 20 to 25 percent range for primary elections and August 2 primary followed that pattern. The truth is that approximately three out of every four voters choose to disenfranchise themselves by not participating in the process. When considering that some primaries were decided by as few as 50 votes, it reinforces the fact that every vote counts and that Missourians need to become more engaged in the political process.

Missourians who did not participate now have the opportunity to research the candidates and their issues and prepare to make their voices heard in November. Missourians will have the ability to help determine the winners and losers and, ultimately, the kind of policies the state and nation will work toward in the coming years. Hopefully Missourians will not take this fundamental right for granted.

### Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday

Summer will soon be winding down and families will turn their attention to sending their kids back to school. School starting up again soon means parents will need to buy new school supplies and clothes to get their children ready for the classroom. To help with this process, Missouri has a three-day back-to-school tax holiday that exempts everything from school supplies to computers from sales tax.

Approved by the legislature in 2003, the three-day period allows parents to buy school-related items such as clothing, school supplies and computers without having to pay the state sales tax of 4.225 percent. In some cases, local municipalities have also chosen to honor the holiday, which means parents in these areas will be able to forego local sales tax as well. For a complete list of the cities and counties that have chosen not to participate, please use the following link:

**<http://dor.mo.gov/business/sales/taxholiday/school/>**

**This** is a great way for Missourians to stretch their dollars by making the cost of going back to school a little more affordable. Parents are encouraged to take advantage of the holiday that begins Friday, Aug. 5 at 12:01 a.m. and runs through Sunday, Aug. 7. It's important to note that the school supply tax exemption has a limit of \$50 per purchase, while the clothing exemption has a \$100 limit and the personal computer tax exemption

has a limit of \$1,500. For more information, please visit:  
<http://dor.mo.gov/business/sales/taxholiday/school/consumers.php>

## **Legislature Likely to Revisit Unemployment Reform Issue**

It was during the 2015 session that the Missouri General Assembly approved legislation to reform the state's system of unemployment. The legislation was intended to bring financial stability to the system, which went insolvent after the 2008 economic downturn. Its primary provisions acted to link unemployment benefits to the rate of unemployment, and ensure the state keeps more money in the unemployment trust fund. It was a change House members supported in order to end Missouri's trend of borrowing money from the federal government to pay for unemployment benefits.

Shortly after the legislature acted, the governor vetoed the legislation to prevent it from becoming law. House members then quickly responded by overriding the governor's veto and sending the bill to the Senate to complete the override. However, Senate members did not act during the regular session, but instead completed the veto override motion during the annual Veto Session in September. The bill then went into effect as law and Missouri reformed its system of unemployment as the legislature intended.

These reforms were recently struck down when the Missouri Supreme Court decided the veto override completed by the legislature was invalid. Specifically, the court decided the Senate violated the constitution by overriding the veto during the annual Veto Session, which the court said is reserved for bills vetoed only during the final week of the regular session or later. In the opinion of the court, because the bill was vetoed by the governor more than a week before session ended, the Senate needed to complete the override motion during the regular session rather than the Veto Session.

The decision drew immediate criticism from legislative leaders. House Speaker Todd Richardson said, "We are now in unprecedented and unsettling territory with the Supreme Court's decision to overstep its authority and create new limits on the legislature's veto override power. The truth is that our constitution provides both legislative bodies with the authority to determine the rules of their own proceedings, and our proceedings clearly complied with our own requirements and the language of the constitution. To see the court overreach in this way in order to invalidate a piece of legislation that received the support of supermajorities in both chambers should raise concerns for all Missourians who believe in fair and balanced branches of government."

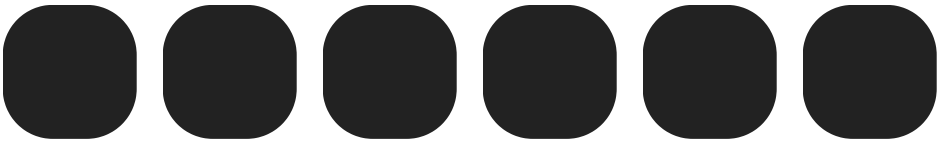
Senate leaders pledged to revisit the issue when the legislature convenes for the 2017

session in January. Members from both chambers have pointed out that the state will have a new governor when the legislature meets again, and many are hopeful the state will have a leader who will work with House and Senate members to fix the state’s system of unemployment so that it can remain solvent.

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