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Jason Smith Capitol Report - Friday, November 11, 2016

NOVEMBER 13TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith Capitol Report - Friday, November 11, 2016

We Honor Your Service, Your Sacrifice

Throughout our country's history our veterans and the patriots before them answered the call of duty and have valiantly fought to make America a place where personal liberties are celebrated and the rights bestowed to us upon the Constitution are forever protected and preserved. Veterans Day is our chance to express gratitude for the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform who thanklessly gave their time and often lives to protect a truly free nation.

This week I visited several schools in southern Missouri that held ceremonies in honor of Veterans Day including Bourbon High School, Sikeston High School and Senath High School. It was wonderful to see a current generation of young people honoring the veterans that have served so they can continue to enjoy the same protections, rights and freedoms of those who came before. I encouraged all of the young Missouri students I visited this week to continue to honor our nation's heroes not just once a year on Veterans Day, but challenged them to find an opportunity throughout the year to give back to their communities and say thank you to the brave men and women who serve our country.

This Veterans Day we also need to remember and recognize the special acts of those in our communities who demonstrated bravery, exemplified service, and made us all proud, those like Tom Surdyke who tragically lost his life in June saving the life of another. I had

the honor of nominating Tom to West Point in 2015 and sharing in his family's celebration the day he earned his Eagle Scout. While on vacation on June 24th, 2016, Tom and another swimmer he'd just met on shore were caught in a rip tide. Tom instinctively went to save the other young man, sacrificing his own life. He was buried at West Point on July 4th, 2016 on his 19th birthday and was given the Soldier's Medal, the Army's highest non-combat valor award for saving the life of another. ?In June, I was lucky enough to honor another American hero, the now late Veteran Raymond Burbach, by presenting him with seven awards and accolades he earned during his service in the Korean War that were 60 years past due. Both Tom and Raymond will always be remembered as American heroes. ?Their dedication to a life of service and the instinct to put others first is what distinguishes our veteran patriots and heroes.

There is much we can do to honor our veterans not just on Veterans Day, but every day of the year by helping them transition successfully back to civilian life. Things like ensuring that veterans have access to adequate health care, including mental health, educational opportunities and good paying jobs when they return home.

For instance, when I heard from numerous veterans across southeast and south central Missouri that they wanted to see expanded care, service hours and options at VA facilities in Salem, I was proud to help by meeting with VA officials and securing additional hours and operations for the facility. Earlier this year, I was also able to play a role in supporting legislation which provided \$176.9 billion in funding for the VA, including \$52.8 billion in funding for VA medical services, which included mental health services, suicide prevention activities, long-term care services, funding for rural health initiatives and support services for caregivers of veterans and initiatives to fight homelessness among veterans and their families. This effort was an important reminder that our thanks shouldn't just be for their active service, but in helping them transition.

There are over 55,000 veterans living in the 8th Congressional District of Missouri alone who deserve our gratitude for their service to our nation. There is much work still to be done to improve the lives of our veterans when they return home - let us make that our duty, our service, and our commitment to all of them, they deserve it.

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Tila Hubrecht Capitol Report - Friday, November 4, 2016

NOVEMBER 08TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tila Hubrecht Capitol Report - Friday, November 4, 2016

Make Your Voice Heard at the Ballot Box on Nov. 8

The voter registration deadline has passed and the people of Missouri are set to help determine the future of the state and the nation on November 8. It's now up to all the registered voters to make their voices heard at the ballot box. They will need to turn out not only to decide who will lead the country, but also to determine races for statewide offices, state representative, and for a range of ballot issues that can make significant changes to the way the state operates. Without question, this is an extremely important election, and if Missourians are going to make this country's representative democracy work as the founding fathers intended, it's imperative that everyone take advantage of the fundamental right that is voting.

The good news is that voter participation rates are typically high during presidential elections. As an example, the 2012 general election saw approximately 2.8 million of the 4.2 million registered voters cast a ballot for a participation rate of almost 66 percent. The

number was even higher for the 2008 general, which saw a participation rate of more than 69 percent. When both numbers are compared to the 35 percent participation rate for the 2014 general election, it is clear that voters are motivated to turn out during presidential elections.

Now it is imperative that voters take the time to learn the candidates and the issues so they can make informed votes. As Thomas Jefferson once said, “Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.” November 8 is an opportunity for Missourians to cast their votes to help determine the direction the state and the nation will take over the next four years.

Dyslexia Task Force Holds First Hearing

The legislature’s Task Force on Dyslexia recently held its first hearing in the State Capitol. The group, which is made up of lawmakers, medical and education officials, and private individuals with expertise or experience with dyslexia, was created with the passage of HB 2379 during the 2016 regular session.

The group is working to make recommendations to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in three key areas: how and when students should be screened for dyslexia; how students with reading issues can be helped in classrooms; and what professional development should be implemented to train faculty in screenings. The department will then take the task force’s recommendations and use them to develop their guidelines, which have to be completed by December 31, 2017.

One of the members of the task force talked about the experiences her niece went through as a student with dyslexia. The state representative noted that her niece was frustrated as she felt like she was doing something wrong even though she was working hard. The task force member hopes that with early screening, students like her niece could be identified and helped to obtain the support they need to achieve their academic potential.

The task force is required to report to the governor and the legislature’s Joint Committee on Education by October 18, 2017. The chair of the task force said the group could make recommendations ahead of the deadline so that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would have more time to consider them.

Once screenings in schools begin, the parents of students who are found to have indicators of dyslexia will be notified, so that they can choose whether to follow-up with more testing by medical professionals.

The task force plans to hold its next hearing at the end of November.

Improving Missouri's System of Foster Care (HB 1877)

A piece of legislation that went into effect as law in August now gives courts more to think about before putting a youth back into the state's foster care system, and gives foster parents more say in their foster children's extracurricular activities.

The legislature approved House Bill 1877 during the 2016 regular session and the governor signed the bill into law. One of its provisions specifies what a court must weigh when considering a petition for a youth to reenter the foster care system. The goal is for a court to look at whether the individual had been behaving properly in the system before leaving it. The sponsor of the legislation said the bill is meant to address an issue where juvenile offenders are sometimes put back into the foster care system even if it's not the proper place for them.

The new law also requires a court and other parties in a child's case to defer to the foster parent in decisions regarding participation in extracurricular and other activities, such as school field trips. The bill is meant to give some clarity to the confusion that sometimes exists in regard to who has the right to give permission to the young person.

HB 1877 also included provisions dealing with when people should be placed on the state's child abuse and neglect registry; identifying and responding to abuse and neglect of children three years old and younger; and the creation of a task force on the prevention of infant abuse and neglect.

Governor Nixon Releases More Budget Dollars

Just a few weeks ago Governor Nixon released approximately \$12 million of the more than \$174 million in funds he had restricted. This week he released another \$8.7 million in funds in reaction to a settlement with Volkswagen. The dollars obtained through the multi-state consumer protection settlement allowed the governor to release additional funds for school transportation, disaster response, and agricultural producers. Specifically, the governor's decision provides \$4.5 million for school transportation. It also releases \$3 million for a previously deferred biodiesel subsidies transfer. Additionally, \$1.2 million in funding will go to the State Emergency Management Agency for Missouri Task Force 1 to support disaster response. Even with the latest release of dollars, the governor continues to withhold more than \$150 million from the current state operating budget.

Services Offered by the Representative

Requesting a Courtesy Resolution

Courtesy resolutions can be requested for many reasons including, but not limited to, an

Anniversary, Birth, Eagle Scout Award, Marriage, Birthday, Business Opening, Special Award, Retirement, or Sports. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you like to request a Courtesy Resolution. If you would like to have me personally present the Courtesy Resolution, please call my office and my assistant will be happy to work with you to schedule for this. My office number is 573/751-1494.

Scheduling a Visit with Me Back in the District

I always enjoy visiting with my constituents in the 151st District. Some of my favorite groups are school aged children but I also enjoy meeting with every age group! If you would like to schedule a visit with me, please call my office at 573/751-1494, my assistant will be happy to work with you to arrange a time for us to visit. Visits can include reading and talking with school children, visiting retirement centers, visiting non-profit groups, businesses, coffee talks, and more.

Visiting the Jefferson City and the Capitol

Even though we are out of session from June to December, any time of the year is a great time to visit the Capitol. The building is a beautiful place to visit and my assistant will be happy to arrange a tour for you while you are in Jefferson City. There are many interesting places to visit during your visit to our state Capitol. A great way to get to Jefferson City is via Amtrak if driving is not possible or challenging. Visitors can tour the Missouri Supreme Court, Old Missouri State Penitentiary, the Missouri Military History Museum, the Missouri State Highway Patrol Museum, and more.

Missouri and United States Flags

If you know of a school, retirement center, non-profit group, or someone else that is in need of a flag, please contact my office at 573/751-1494 and we will arrange to have a new flag sent or delivered to them.

Scheduling Class or Large Group Visits at the Capitol

If your school is planning on traveling to the Capitol between January and May, contact my Capitol office as soon as you know a date to set up the tour, things become busy very quickly during the session. Tours of the Governor's Mansion and Capitol fill up rapidly with schools from all over Missouri, so, the sooner, the better. It is best to set up your school visits or large group visits at least 6 months out if possible. If this is not possible, contact my office and we will try very hard to see what we can arrange for you, rest assured, not all will be lost though, there are plenty of self-guided tours and other sites to visit. If you are planning a visit during the Interim Period, June through December, please call my office, if I am in Jefferson City during your visit, I would enjoy scheduling a visit with you and showing you the Capitol!

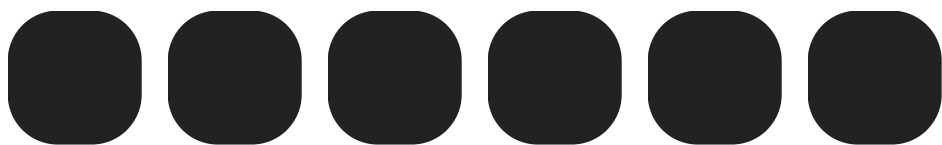
Service Member and Veterans Services

Enough cannot be said of the sacrifices our brave men and women of the Armed Forces make for our freedoms every day, both at home and abroad. The Missouri Veterans Commission has put together a guide for Missouri resources for military service members and their families with contacts for local VA Hospitals and Centers, the American Legion, the VFW, the other resources for our veterans. To request one, please contact my office at 573/751-1494 and we will be more than happy to provide you with a copy of this helpful guide.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, November 4, 2016

NOVEMBER 07TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report

Let's Find the Time

November 4th, 2016

For over 200 years American patriots have shed their blood to fight for independence, liberty, and a democratic process that puts more power into the hands of citizens than monarchs and tyrants. Our country's history is also marked with numerous physical and political battles to expand the right to vote to millions more deserved Americans.

Unfortunately today participation in elections in the U.S. is some of the lowest among developed countries. In fact, voter turnout has not surpassed 65% since 1948.

When comparing the U.S. to other developed countries we rank 31st among 35 in terms of voter participation in the democratic process. U.S. turnout in the 2012 presidential election was 53.6%, while Belgium, Turkey, and Sweden were all above 80%. Further, only about 65% of the U.S. voting-age population was registered in 2012, compared with 91% in Canada and the United Kingdom and nearly 99% in Japan.

Often getting to the polls becomes a choice between participating in the process and another must accomplish task of the day. While balancing the time commitment on election day can be difficult we find examples throughout the world where some risk their own safety to have their voices heard. Despite threats from the Taliban, Afghan women in 2014 turned out to vote risking their own lives to cast a vote in local and presidential elections. In Nepal, some voters walked hours to reach polling places because the election commission restricted the use of unregistered vehicles on the country's roads on election day in 2013. Despite this inconvenience, voter turnout in Nepal was 65%.

Some choose not to vote because they feel their one vote doesn't matter. However, when you look throughout American political history, we see otherwise. In 1960, the election between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon was won by Kennedy but the difference was less than 120,000 votes nationally or 0.1%.

More recently the 2000 presidential election between Al Gore and George W. Bush was razor thin. The election, ultimately won by Bush, came down to a single state and a few hundred votes. Ultimately it was a mere 537 votes out of more than 5.9 million cast in

Florida that decided the outcome of the election. Perhaps most famously though was the 1948 race between Harry S. Truman and Thomas Dewey which was so close that the Chicago Tribune printed newspapers with the headline “Dewey Defeats Truman” and prompted one of the most famous pictures in U.S. history as President-elect Truman displayed the newspaper from the back of a train after being announced the eventual winner.

Casting our votes is our right as American, it's what separates our democracy from some of the most oppressive tyrannical regimes still present in today's world, and is something thousands of Americans throughout our history have fought to protect. American women fought a long battle to secure the right to vote. Many women who participated in the Women's Suffrage Movement in the 1910's, were often jailed for their peaceful protests and in jail were often tortured, beaten and forced to live in inhumane conditions. However, their efforts were not in vain after women gained the right to vote through the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Throughout the 1960's, many states employed discriminatory voter suppression tactics to keep African-Americans from the polls. Thus the Civil Rights Movement began in which thousands of African-Americans protested for their right to vote, often being subjected to violence like the protest on “Bloody Sunday” where 500 activists marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama only to be met by police who attacked them with billy clubs and tear gas, all because they peacefully demanded the right to vote.

The feeling of freely casting your vote is something millions more around the world still do not know. On November 8th millions of Americans will cast our votes and exercise one of the most important rights bestowed to us because it preserves ALL other rights we are granted and sets the direction for our country, state and locality for years to come. This year the decision we make is a critical one about who we will be as a nation, our standing in the world, the safety of our communities, the quality of our healthcare, and unleashing our potential. For these reasons and for those who gave us this privilege I hope we can all find the time.

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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - All Tricks, No Treats

OCTOBER 30TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - All Tricks, No Treats

**Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report
For Service – All Tricks, No Treats
October 28th, 2016**

Thousands of brave Americans have answered the call of duty to serve our country and protect us from terrorism. These brave soldiers fought tirelessly to defend our country in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the globe. I was appalled this week to learn along with millions of Americans that now some fifteen years later, many of these soldiers are being asked to repay enlistment bonuses doled out during the global war on terror.

In order to keep highly trained and desirable personnel in the service, the US military has long used incentives such as re-enlistment bonuses. In the early 2000's the US military used re-enlistment bonuses and other incentives for thousands of National Guard Troops in California. In 2010, revelations about mismanagement by the California National Guard surfaced. Following these findings, nearly 10,000 soldiers who were given bonuses were ordered to repay them or face serious financial penalties such as wage garnishments and tax liens. That's right, because of bureaucratic mismanagement, our country's soldiers were being asked to make up for the mistakes of paper pushers.

It is clear that Military recruiters betrayed these soldiers, making promises they could not keep and offering incentives they were not authorized to give, but our nation's heroes should not have to pay for the mistakes of military officials' from over a decade ago. In May I helped pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to help correct this injustice by putting a stop to the military going after soldiers for mistakes like this that military personnel make. Simply put, our troops should not be punished for the mistakes made by the Department of Defense.

In 2007, President Obama made a promise to the American people to 'ensure that our troops have the resources, support, and equipment they need to protect themselves and fulfill their mission', but the reality today is that throughout his presidency he has consistently put military readiness and the interests of our troops on the back burner. In early September, a leaked Pentagon memo revealed the Obama Administration's plan to veto this year's National Defense Bill which would have ended the outrageous action of recouping 15 year old military payments. That same Defense Authorization Act included a much needed pay raise for our troops and \$2.5 billion for necessary training and maintenance which are funding needs identified as critical by the military services.

Whether they are still on the battlefield or back home, we have a duty to take care of our soldiers. Just this week I met with VA officials to discuss the VA facilities in southeast and south central Missouri. I had previously shared with them the signatures of 5,700 Missourians seeking increased care and services for the veterans in our area and I reiterated my support for such in our meeting. I was pleased that during the meeting the VA confirmed they would expand services, options and care hours at a facility in south central Missouri. Additionally, later in the day the pentagon finally announced that they would no longer be trying to recoup the old bonus payments from our soldiers. While millions of American families are struggling to make ends meet, asking our military members to make repayments because of bureaucratic errors was not appropriate or fair.

With so many problems facing our country and our government it is embarrassing that going after payments to our soldiers was ever a priority. The Department of Defense owes it to the American people to be focused on eradicating entities like ISIS and staying vigilant against terror threats abroad and here at home. The White House should be less focused on vetoing legislation containing pay increases and resources for American troops and instead on how to mitigate the threats from countries like Iran and North Korea. It's time your government put at the top of its responsibility list the safety and security of you and your family, not its own misguided agenda.

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A Look Ahead to the November Ballot Issues

OCTOBER 14TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

A Look Ahead to the November Ballot Issues

Missouri - November will give voters the opportunity to decide important races for the presidency, statewide offices, and other state and local offices and issues. Missourians will also have the opportunity to decide several ballot measures that could make important changes to the way the state operates. Ranging in topic from voter identification to tax increases on cigarettes, the ballot issues represent the efforts of the legislature and the initiative petition process, as well as the state constitution, to empower voters to decide important issues for the state.

These races and issues make it extremely important that voters turn out to make their voices heard on November 8.

A detailed overview of each of the ballot issues is included below.

Constitutional Amendment 1 – Missouri’s Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

Constitutional Amendment 1 will give Missourians the opportunity to decide if the state should continue its one-tenth of one percent sales/use tax that is used to support soil and water conservation, and for state parks and historic sites. The tax was first approved by voters in 1984, and then again in 1988, 1996, and 2006. The renewal of the tax is re-submitted to voters every 10 years under the state constitution. The tax generates approximately \$90 million each year for soil and water conservation, and for the operation of the state park system.

Supporters of the tax point out that more than 61,000 conservation practices have been implemented through \$348 million in cost-share grant projects since the tax was last renewed in 2006. The funds have helped to prevent millions of tons of soil from eroding into Missouri’s rivers and lakes. Funding is also utilized to maintain and improve Missouri’s 88 parks and historic sites.

Constitutional Amendment 2 – Campaign Contribution Limits

If approved by voters, Constitutional Amendment 2 will re-establish campaign contribution limits in Missouri. The state previously had limits in place that were approved by voters in 1994. The limits were repealed by the General Assembly in 2008.

Constitutional Amendment 2 would limit contributions to individual candidates to \$2,600 per election. It would limit contributions to political parties to \$25,000 each election. The amendment is also designed to prevent individuals and entities from intentionally concealing the source of the contributions. Additionally, the amendment would create a complaint process and penalties for violating its requirements.

Supporters of the amendment say it is important to restore limits so that large donors do not have too much influence in the political realm. Opponents say the current system ensures transparency in the system and a return to limits will only cause large donors to hide their contributions by funneling them through various political committees.

Constitutional Amendment 3 – Cigarette Tax Increase for Early Childhood Education

Constitutional Amendment 3 is one of two proposals on the ballot that would increase the tax on cigarettes. Amendment 3 would increase taxes on cigarettes until 2020 when the total increase would reach 60 cents per pack of 20. The amendment also would create a

67-cent per pack fee for wholesalers to pay on certain cigarettes.

If approved by voters the amendment would generate between \$263 million and \$374 million each year. The additional revenues would be placed in an Early Childhood Health and Education Trust Fund and utilized for early childhood education.

Supporters of the proposal say Missouri lags behind other states in providing state-funded preschool programs. They also note that Missouri currently has the lowest tax on cigarette sales in the country. Missouri currently taxes cigarettes at the rate of 17 cents per pack tax while the national average is at \$1.65 per pack. Opponents have raised concerns that the proposal is a “tax scheme” that will divert money away from public K-12 schools and allow for public funds to be used by private schools. They also note that language in the proposal would restrict the funding from being used for the enforcement of tobacco laws and smoking cessation programs. Additionally, the funds raised by the measure would be allocated by an unelected commission rather than by the normal appropriations process.

Proposition A – Cigarette Tax Increase for Transportation Infrastructure

The second cigarette tax increase proposal on the November ballot would slowly increase the tax per pack and then use the additional revenue to fund transportation infrastructure projects in Missouri. Proposition A would increase the tax on each pack of cigarettes by 13 cents in 2017, by 5 cents in 2019, and by another 5 cents in 2021. The total increase would amount to 23 cents for a total tax in Missouri of 40 cents per pack of 20. The proposal would also increase the tax that sellers pay on other tobacco products by 5 percent of the manufacturer’s invoice price.

When fully implemented, the tax increases would generate approximately \$95 million to \$103 million each year. The money would then be placed in a Transportation Infrastructure Fund to be used for road repairs throughout the state.

Both tax increase measures have been opposed by groups like the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association, which say neither tax increase is big enough. Some groups also take issue with the fact the campaigns for both measures are supported by tobacco companies. Constitutional Amendment 3 has received financial support from big tobacco companies like R.J. Reynolds, while Proposition A has received support from smaller cigarette companies. The small companies have opposed Constitutional Amendment 3 because of the 67 cents per pack fee increase that is directed at them. Backers of Amendment 3 say the fee increase is meant to close a loophole that has allowed small companies to avoid making payments to 46 states mandated by a multi-state court settlement to help offset Medicaid costs.

If both measures were to be approved by voters, Missouri law says the proposal with the greater number of affirmative votes would take effect, but the final outcome would likely be decided in court.

Constitutional Amendment 4 – Prohibition on New Sales and Use Taxes

Constitutional Amendment 4 would prohibit state or local sales or use taxes on services. In effect, the proposal would ensure that governmental entities do not create new taxes on services such as a haircut or a repair service for a vehicle.

In recent years states like North Carolina and Washington have enacted taxes on services. North Carolina's new tax extends to services like auto repair, sign painting, and some heating and plumbing work. States have enacted the new taxes in an effort to make up for lagging revenues from lower sales tax collections. Amendment 4 is designed to ensure similar taxes cannot be put into place in Missouri. The amendment has been supported by business organizations such as the Missouri Bankers Association, the Missouri Press Association, and the Missouri Association of Realtors, which circulated the petition to put the amendment on the ballot.

Constitutional Amendment 6 – Voter Identification

Constitutional Amendment 6 will allow voters to decide if the Missouri Constitution should be changed to allow a system of voter identification. If approved by voters, legislation approved by the Missouri General Assembly would then implement the system of voter identification. The new law would require voters to present a specified form of identification in order to vote in a public election. Valid forms of identification would include photo IDs issued by the state, the federal government or the military. The proposal also would require the state to pay for individuals to obtain a valid ID if they do not have one, or to obtain documents necessary for an ID. Additionally, the new law contains a provision that would allow a voter without a valid photo ID to vote with a regular ballot by showing another form of identification.

Supporters of the voter identification system say it is important to protect the integrity of the elections system. They say requiring a photo ID will prevent voter fraud at the polling place by requiring each voter to prove that they are who they say they are. They also note the provisions of the new law make it easy for anyone without an ID to obtain one. Opponents of the measure say a system of voter identification will disenfranchise voters who do not have a photo ID, or the means to easily obtain one. They also say there are no

proven cases of voter fraud to warrant the creation of a voter ID system.

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