



TOP

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - An Addiction that Kills

MAY 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Congressman Smith Capitol Report

An Addiction that Kills

May 18, 2018

Over the counter, under the table, stolen from a family member, begged for from a friend, purchased in a back alley, hidden in a classmates locker, received from a coworker, leftover from an injury, a forged prescription, obtained from a complete stranger. Homeless, well-educated, rich, poor, athletic, bookworm, dropout, cheerleader, unemployed, successful, mother, father, son, daughter. Synthetic opioid pain relievers like fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and so many others can find their way to anyone through any way possible. They don't discriminate based on the user's background and they certainly don't care how you get them, but the national opioid epidemic is here, it's real, and it's deadly.

With over 30,000 opioid related deaths last year, those dying from opioid overdoses has tripled since the turn of the century. The amount of opioid deaths each year more than doubles those related to illicit drugs like heroin, or legal substances like alcohol. To look at it another way, opioid deaths last year accounted for more than double the number of murders in the entire United States for the year. Unless we start taking more steps to address it, these numbers will continue to climb until each one of us has lost a friend, a neighbor, or a loved one to this catastrophic epidemic.

In 2016, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act was signed into law which encompassed a number of efforts to combat opioid abuse pervasive across the country. From programs to help infants born to opioid addicted mothers to more oversight of doctors prescribing painkillers, it was an important first step to addressing some of the most glaring things which could be done to mitigate the explosion of opioid usage in America. But clearly more must be done.

Specifically, we must get to the root of the problem – where are most Americans first exposed to opioids? How do they become addicted? Approximately 51 million Americans undergo inpatient surgery each year, and over 80% of the patients who step foot into some type of surgery room receive a pain relief opioid. Roughly 75% of those patients usually have leftover unused opioids after a surgery – creating the opportunity for addiction, resale and abuse. In other words, the surgical setting is contributing to the opioid crisis by potentially exposing millions of patients annually to the risk of addiction. Patients receiving opioids after surgeries have a 44% increased risk of long term opioid use, and over 60% of people who walk out of the hospital with 3 month prescriptions for opioids will remain on those same opioids years later.

To address and reduce opioid use in surgical settings, most recently, I authored, introduced and advanced in Congress the Perioperative Reduction of Opioids (PRO) Act. This legislation will help bring about changes to limit patient exposure to opioids during pre and post-surgery center visits, better inform patients on pain management, help prevent opioid misuse and abuse after patient discharge and set up systems for safe storage and disposal of opioids. To fix any problem, you have to get to the source of the occurrence; to fix any leak, you have to identify where the problem spot is located – combatting opioid abuse is no different. We know patients are being prescribed opioids at a higher rate than ever before and opioids are more readily available than ever before. If we can cut down on the way patients are legally obtaining opioids, we can help prevent the illegal usage and illegal acts they take later on to fuel that addiction.

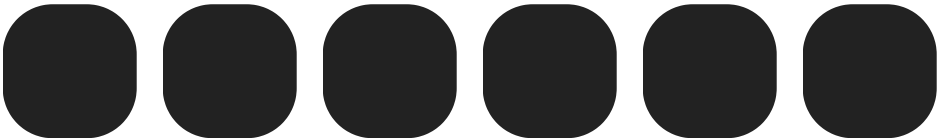
We have all read the sad stories about the mother of three young children, the valedictorian destined for big things, or the high school soccer star whose life was ended at the hands of an opioid addiction. But more than thinking about what could have been for these individuals, we must take action to turn the tide against an addiction which is consuming more and more of our country each day. It is my hope the PRO Act can be one small part of that solution by addressing the legal ways in which folks get their hands on opioids and ultimately become dependent on them. My heart hurts with each story I hear about another southern Missouri life lost as a result of the deadly grip of opioid addiction.

I pray for their life, for their friends, and for their family, but my prayers also include finding a solution to this crisis which so many of our towns and communities are now facing.

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Blunt Commends USDA’s Appointment of Richard Fordyce to serve as Farm Service Agency Administrator

MAY 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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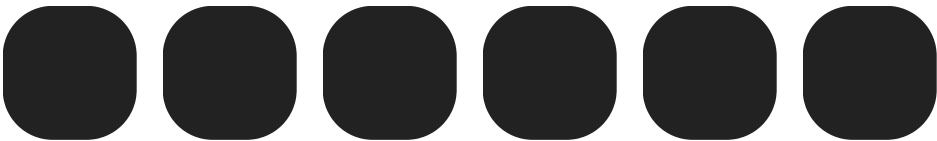
Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.) released the following statement today commending U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue’s announcement that Richard Fordyce has been appointed to serve as Administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency:

“Richard Fordyce is a 4th generation farmer, dedicated public servant, and tireless advocate for rural communities. His background as the head of the Farm Service Agency’s state office and the Missouri Department of Agriculture has undoubtedly prepared him to lead the network of 2,100 county and 50 state offices. I’m grateful for his service to our state and look forward to working with him to improve the quality of life in rural communities and ensure farmers have the support they need to continue leading the way in a global economy.”

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - With the World Watching

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - With the World Watching

Congressman Smith Capitol Report

With the World Watching

May 11, 2018

Tough Negotiations. They were a staple of President Trump's time as an executive and businessman and they have followed him all the way to the White House. Where predecessors have capitulated, the Trump Administration is proving a tough and apt negotiator when foreign leaders come knocking at the door. Whether it be sitting down with the leaders of Mexico, Canada, China and Japan to negotiate fairer deals for American workers and farmers, traveling to Europe to put real and meaningful preconditions for the continued use of U.S. assistance dollars, dealing with the dysfunctional United Nations, or most recently using both the carrot and stick in dealing with North Korea and Iran, the President is changing America's role in international affairs for the better.

This week we watched 3 Americans previously held captive in North Korea step back onto U.S. soil for the first time in years. Tony Kim & Kim Hak-Song joined President Trump on the tarmac at roughly 3am after landing back in the U.S., they had been held in North Korea for 12 months each. They were joined by Kim Dong Chul, an American who had been held in North Korea against his will for over 2 ½ years. What contrast. We all sadly remember the images of Otto Warmbier's seemingly lifeless body being wheeled off a plane in Cincinnati, Ohio almost one year ago. While the tragedy of that situation only serves to further highlight the ruthlessness and brutality of a regime which continues to have little to no regard for the rule of law or basic human rights, what we witnessed this week was an important first step to what may very well serve as a larger conversation for saving the lives of millions of North Koreans, South Koreans and individuals around the globe. A concession of this magnitude was an important moment clearing the way for meaningful and substantive talks about a denuclearized North Korea; talks which are set to occur between President Trump and the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, next month.

Also this week, roughly 4,000 miles away, another country has been posed with serious questions about their future. Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear capabilities, development of weapons of catastrophic proportions, refusal to release held American hostages and aggressiveness towards important U.S. allies like Israel resulted in President Trump vacating the failed U.S. – Iran deal of 2015. It was a deal predicated with secret side deals

not disclosed to the American public, a deal which allowed the nuclear ambitions of Iran to grow, and a deal which allowed for continued aggressive actions like the detaining of five new Americans in Iran since the deal's signing. With the end of that deal comes the reintroduction of crippling economic sanctions which will serve to isolate, deplete and place strain on the crumbling Iran economy - the same type of sanctions which have finally brought North Korea to the negotiating table. It is my sincere hope that any future deals with Iran would remove their ability to manufacture nuclear weapons today, tomorrow or years from now, as well as involve the release of the five American hostages they are still holding.

While some have characterized our President's foreign affair philosophy as 'predictably unpredictable' or a doctrine of 'maximum pressure', one constant holds true, President Trump is a seasoned negotiator who brings a lifetime of business experience when he sits across the table from foreign leaders. The tactics, persistence and follow-through of President Trump will once again be on the international world stage next week as the U.S. Embassy in Israel formally begins operating out of Jerusalem, an action one U.S. President after the next has promised to take, but failed to do. We have a long way to go in securing a denuclearized North Korea, peace in the Middle East and the return of more Americans unjustly held abroad, but this week was an important step and one we should all reflect upon.

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Providing a Pathway to Success for Missouri's Future

MAY 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Providing a Pathway to Success for Missouri's Future

In January of this year my office hosted the 2018 Southeast Missouri Education Forum at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff with over 40 K-12 schools represented by their Superintendents, Principals, and Board members. The theme of the forum was “are we teaching what our students need for the 21st century?”

Recently, the Missouri Senate gave final approval to legislation intended to attract high paying jobs to Missouri. Senate Bill 894/921, which I sponsored, incentivizes high school students to take computer science courses. Ensuring the passage of this career opportunity bill was one of my top priorities for the 2018 legislative session.

It requires new computer science standards to include coding and programming along with guidelines designed for K-12 schools. This will encourage more Missouri students to study computer science by allowing the course to count toward high school graduation. Polls indicate that 93% of Missouri parents want their children to be taught the computer science skills they need for the 21st Century job market. This knowledge is in high demand across our state and country. The bill also creates a certification program for computer science teachers as well as introduces an online program that showcases STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers and their impact on today's economy.

It has been reported that more than 11,000 unfilled computer science jobs are available in our state, with an average salary of \$82,000, which is nearly double the current average salary in Missouri. Computing occupations are the number one source of all new wages in the United States. Jobs in STEM related fields, especially those focusing on computer technology, are the driving force of growth and innovation throughout Missouri. I am pleased to see this legislation receive approval from the General Assembly, not only for the opportunities it presents for today's students, but for all Missourians. Senate Bill 894, received final approval and is now headed to the governor's desk for his signature. The legislation will go into effect on Aug. 28, 2018.

I welcome you to visit your State Capitol and stop by our office in room 219, or call (573) 751-4843 with any questions, concerns or comments you may have. I am honored to serve the citizens of the 25th Senatorial District.

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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Week for American Job Creators

MAY 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - A Week for American Job Creators

**Congressman Smith Capitol Report
A Week for American Job Creators
May 4, 2018**

The comeback of rural America, ignited in large part by a President who understands that we are more than just flyover country on the way to Hollywood, has been joined in recent months with new optimism from American small businesses. Whether it be a result of reducing the federal tax burden, slashing thousands of regulations which were tying up valuable business resources and employee time, or a change in the overall atmosphere from one which wants to punish American entrepreneurs to one which wants to reward them, small businesses across the U.S. are thriving. This week we pause to reflect on the importance of these small businesses and their contribution to our economy during American Small Business Week.

As the American economy comes roaring back, the importance of small businesses, defined as those with less than 500 employees, can't be overstated. Small businesses jobs account for half of all those in the U.S. and are rising – in fact two out of every three new jobs in this country come directly from a small business. These are the family owned and run operations where the owners sweat, equity and risk taking often keeps them awake each night.

I was fortunate this week to visit several thriving small businesses across southern Missouri to hear about their operations and what I can be working on to help them succeed. Mike Roberts, owner of Mansfield Building Supply in Wright County showed me his business and discussed the logistics of operating additional stores in Ava, Gainesville and Seymour. He talked to me about rising confidence from consumers and suppliers with President Trump in the White House; a marked difference from the last eight years where they didn't know which Washington regulation they would be socked with next.

It's simple, with a cut in taxes, massive regulatory relief, and an improving business climate, small businesses are once again investing, hiring and expanding. Unemployment is at 3.9%, a 17 year low and wages are up almost 3%, their highest year to year in 10 years. Most recently, the National Federation of Independent Business shared that optimism amongst small businesses was at some of the highest points in the last 45 years. They also reported that pay increases from small business owners to employees was at its highest level since the turn of the century, with many other owners planning new job creation announcements.

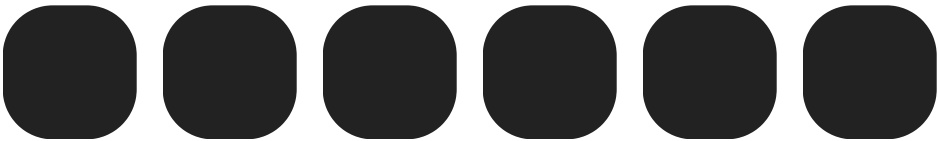
When Washington over regulates, when Washington over taxes – it is the American small business owner who disproportionately carries that burden. With few employees, compliance costs cannot be distributed and hours and money which could be spent

growing ones business are instead spent on filling out paperwork for a Washington bureaucrat. Something has gone off the tracks when business expansion plans have to be put on hold because it is more complex to complete your stack of 1099 forms or the latest reporting requirement from the IRS. That is where we were. But for the last 17 months, I have worked under the leadership of a President who wants to correct that wrong, who has slashed taxes, removed over 1,000 regulations and whose committing to doing more. Our work isn't done, but with unemployment down, wages up and businesses ready to invest and grow, we know we are on the right path.

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