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# Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Thank You Veterans

NOVEMBER 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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**Congressman Smith Capitol Report  
Thank You, Veterans  
November 9, 2018**

This Sunday, November 11th is the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, which marks the official end of World War I. Today we call the anniversary celebration Veterans' Day, but the meaning is the same – a day where our country expresses its sincere gratitude for everything our nation's veterans have done to defend us at home and protect our way of life.

Every veteran has sacrificed for you and me in one way or another. It's not just the physical sacrifice they endure in a grueling bootcamp, a tour of duty, or the wounds of war. The men and women who serve choose to give up priceless years of their lives for our country. It's the irreplaceable birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and family time they will never get back, all in the name of protecting the United States. They put their entire lives on hold to serve and leave their careers, family, and friends at home knowing there's a chance they may never return again.

Just as our veterans answered the call of duty to serve our nation, the duty is ours to support our veterans when their service ends. Almost every veteran I speak to has a story of how they were frustrated with the Department of Veterans Affairs at one point or

another. Some of the frustration was with the arbitrary 30-day and 40-mile distance requirements to seek care outside the VA, and that's why President Trump and I overhauled the VA system to make it easier for veterans to receive timely care outside the VA. Unfortunately like every government bureaucracy, in the past bad actors were able to hide behind government rules to stay employed at the VA. I was proud to be part of the team that sent a bill to President Trump that allows his administration to say "you're fired" to anyone who mistreated or neglected our veterans and didn't give them the care they deserve.

Any veteran or their family that needs help should look to my office as a resource. We assist veterans with the Department of Veterans Affairs, help families track down military records, and have made sure veterans in Missouri received medals that were supposed to be given to them long ago. Thanks to the 5,700 veterans who contacted my office, we successfully petitioned the Salem VA Clinic to expand their hours and the services they offer.

I'm proud that southern Missouri is a welcoming and supportive place where the 55,300 veterans who live here receive the respect and appreciation they deserve. In Cape Girardeau, the VFW creates the Avenue of Flags with an American flag for every veteran in the county who served our country. This year Perryville completed a full-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, and Piedmont hosted life-size replicas of Washington's veterans memorials so that the people of Missouri don't have to travel to D.C. to pay their respects. Local schools and businesses are showing their appreciation this weekend by offering free meals and ceremonies for veterans to honor their service. Southern Missouri's kindness to veterans can be seen in the numerous cities that have proclaimed themselves "Purple Heart Cities," and Poplar Bluff recently was honored as the first rural "Veteran Friendly Community" in Missouri, a distinction awarded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Whether it's at one of the parades, concerts, or events across southern Missouri, there are numerous ways to show your respect and pay tribute to veterans this weekend, and some creative ideas you may not have thought of. Hunters who take down a deer when hunting season starts this weekend can donate deer hides to the Elks Club in West Plains to be made into buckskin gloves for veterans in wheelchairs. President Trump's administration is waiving the fee for all public lands this Sunday, including the Ozarks National Scenic Riverways, because more than a third of America's national parks are battlefields, cemeteries, and sites that honor military veterans. And this week is also National Veteran's Small Business Week, which encourages another method of supporting our veterans at home: by giving patronage to veteran-owned businesses.

I'm humbled and inspired by all of the sacrifices our veterans make to protect our way of life at home. Adjustment back to civilian life is never seamless for those who serve, and the duty is ours to support them for everything they have given us. We're blessed to live in the freest country that has ever existed on the face of the earth, and for that we should all thank a veteran.

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