

Political Blogs



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2019 Mid-Session Legislative Update by MO-Senator Doug Libla

MARCH 22ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

2019 Mid-Session Legislative Update by MO-Senator Doug Libla

The First Regular Session of the 100th General Assembly of the State of Missouri began with a call from the governor to prioritize workforce development and infrastructure investment. Over the course of the past 10 weeks, the Missouri Senate has focused on these and many other issues including some that required lengthy debate and deliberation.

The Senate approved four of my legislative proposals. [Senate Bill 21](#) will allow the City of Portageville to propose a 1/4 cent sales tax for the purposes of improving public safety.

[Senate Bill 89](#) will allow the director of revenue to waive the written and skills test for military applicants who have been trained to operate a commercial vehicle while serving our country. This legislation will make it easier for military personnel to obtain a civilian CDL when they leave the military.

[Senate Bill 20](#) extends the DNA Profiling Analysis Fund. Without this extension, it would create a funding shortfall of approximately \$909,579 annually. The DNA Profiling Analysis Fund can only be used by the Highway Patrol crime lab to fulfill the purposes of the DNA profiling system. DNA profiling is a powerful tool used by our law enforcement officers to help solve crimes.

[Senate Bill 90](#) will require all employers with 50 or more workers to report quarterly wage information to the Division of Employment Security in an electronic format. The director will still have the authority, if good cause is shown, to allow paper filing. This will allow the Division of Employment Security to process the information more accurately and in less time.

Senate Bills 21, 89, 20 and 90 have been sent to the Missouri House of Representatives for a committee hearing.

In addition to these legislative proposals, my colleagues and I continue to discuss practical solutions for funding of education across the state. One of the more contentious proposals is [Senate Bill 160](#), a bill that would create the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts tax credit program. I do not support this proposal because it could cost the state up to \$25 million in General Revenue. In addition, I believe if this legislation were to pass, it would be a detriment to public school resources. As legislators, we have a responsibility to provide the best public education investment possible.

When we return from spring break on March 25, I look forward to the debate on one of my top legislative priorities, [Senate Bill 19](#). This bill eliminates probation or parole for anyone found guilty in the first, second, third or fourth degree of assaulting a law enforcement officer, firefighter or emergency medical provider while performing their official duties. Our emergency responders need to know that members of the Missouri General Assembly have their back. As chairman of the [Senate Transportation and Public Safety Committee](#), I will keep this important issue at the forefront of the Missouri Legislature's agenda during the remaining weeks of session.

Please visit your State Capitol and stop by our office in room 422, 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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U.S. Senator Blunt Tours Missouri's National

Veterans Memorial

MARCH 11TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

U.S. Senator Blunt Tours Missouri's National Veterans Memorial

U.S Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.) toured Missouri's National Veterans Memorial in Perryville.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to those who made the ultimate sacrifice serving our nation in the Vietnam War,” said Blunt. “This memorial is a powerful tribute to the more than 1,400 Missourians and thousands of Americans whose memories are forever etched in our nation's history. I'm grateful for Jim Eddleman's service to our nation and his tireless efforts to build this memorial so families, friends, and veterans have a place close to home to honor their loved ones.”

Prior to touring the memorial, Blunt discussed his efforts in Congress to honor veterans in Missouri and across the nation. Blunt mentioned his [Veteran PEER Act](#), bipartisan legislation that expanded veterans' access to peer counseling specialists to better combat the risks of suicide and treat associated mental health conditions. Blunt also discussed a recent [letter](#) that he and the entire Missouri Congressional delegation sent to President Trump urging the administration to designate a state funeral for the last Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

Blunt continued, “While we can never fully repay our veterans for their sacrifices, we must do our part to ensure they have the benefits they have earned and deserve. From improving and expanding access to quality mental and physical health treatment to supporting our heroes in every step of their career, I'll continue advocating for policies that help us fulfill our obligations to those who served.”

In September 2017, Blunt participated in a [ceremony](#) at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. that marked the start of a cross-country trip where an American flag and POW/MIA flag, each of which was flown over the memorial, made their way to the site of the Missouri's National Veterans Memorial Park.

Missouri is also home to the nation's first Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated on Dec. 2, 1967 in Wentzville.

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Congressman Smith - Capitol Report Growing Leaders February 22, 2019

FEBRUARY 23RD 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Congressman Smith Capitol Report
Growing Leaders
February 22, 2019

This week FFA students and chapters around the country participated in National FFA week and celebrated FFA's impact in our schools, communities, and our farms. FFA is one of the largest youth organizations in the United States and it's about much more than growing crops and raising animals; it's about growing leaders.

More than 25,000 young Missourians wear the FFA's famous National Blue corduroy jacket with Corn Gold lettering. It's a tradition that dates back to the 1933 FFA Convention in Kansas City, but the values and traditions FFA teaches young people today date back much further and have been held closely by Americans for hundreds of years. Agriculture is deeply rooted in America's history, as are the values of responsibility, accountability, hard work, and building up the community around you. FFA teaches students an appreciation for both the joys and discomforts of agriculture, a belief in their own abilities, and an aspiration to live an honest life.

Like many other alumni, I know my life wouldn't be the same had I never joined FFA. Twenty years ago this year I earned the American FFA degree, an achievement I'm still proud of today. Finding an organization I could be passionate about broke me out of my shell and gave me the confidence to try new things outside of my comfort zone. In fact, the first time I ever visited our nation's capital was through an FFA leadership program. FFA has a wide range of activities that allow students to discover their passion in life and explore their unique talents. Students can exhibit or judge livestock, learn to manage soil and grasslands, and participate in one of the many contest teams. There's an activity for everyone in FFA, from agriculture sales to debating parliamentary procedure, practicing public speaking, and even joining the FFA choir. While they're pursuing their individual interests, students learn teamwork, communication skills, and become more developed leaders.

During my farm tour last year, I was blessed to meet a lot of FFA members from southern Missouri. At Valley R-VI School District in Caledonia, school officials partnered with the local agricultural community to create an FFA farm next to the school, giving students the incredible opportunity to learn the best agricultural practices firsthand. And when I held a Farmhall in Oran, I was impressed by the number of young farmers in attendance, many of whom started out in agriculture with FFA. They showed me the latest drones and technology that are becoming more common on farms today. I was reminded of the FFA creed, which states, "I believe in the future of agriculture... in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years."

When I met with Fredericktown R-I FFA students this week, I told the students that while FFA instills a deep appreciation for agriculture and prepares them for agricultural careers, their futures are hardly limited to a life on the farm. FFA members are future biologists, chemists, veterinarians, engineers, and entrepreneurs. FFA alumni include Members of Congress, athletes, famous actors, CEOs of major companies, and even former President of the United States Jimmy Carter.

The life skills, work ethic, and values FFA members learn will serve them well their whole life, regardless of the career path they choose. As we celebrate FFA week this week, we should celebrate all that FFA does to prepare students for their futures. FFA does more than just grow crops and animals – it strengthens agriculture, builds communities, and grows leaders.

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Congressman Smith Leads Charge to Give Working Families Permanent Tax Relief

FEBRUARY 23RD 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Congressman Smith Leads Charge to Give Working Families Permanent Tax Relief](#)

Congressman Smith Leads Charge to Give Working Families Permanent Tax Relief

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Jason Smith (MO-08) introduced H.R. 217, the Permanent Tax Relief for Working Families Act, to make permanent the new Child Tax Credit established under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which he coauthored as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means.

“Becoming a parent is the most important job a mother or father will ever have, but our tax code could do a better job of supporting working families,” said Congressman Smith. “In the last year that it has been in effect, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act put more money in Missourians’ pockets, and we need to give parents the long-term certainty that it will stay there. Making the new Child Tax Credit permanent will allow families the chance to plan,

save, and invest in their future and help parents get started on the right foot when starting a family.”

While crafting the new tax law and advocating for a more beneficial Child Tax Credit, Congressman Smith worked closely with Ivanka Trump, a champion for working families and a strong proponent of doubling the tax credit. Speaking previously at the U.S. Capitol to rally support for the expanded Child Tax Credit, Ivanka Trump said it is a priority of the Trump administration to ensure working American families can thrive.

“When you think about the last time there was comprehensive tax reform, it was decades ago. The composition of our workforce looked very different, and our homes looked very different,” said Ivanka Trump. “Today in the vast majority of homes, parents are working. Our tax code has to recognize this reality and support our dual values of work and family.”

Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was signed into law by President Trump, the Child Tax Credit was only available to certain qualifying families and worth up to \$1,000. Because of Congressman Smith’s work, the credit was expanded to \$2,000 per child with a valid social security number and made refundable.

While the initial Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2017 made the enhanced Child Tax Credit permanent, Senate filibuster rules prevented permanency. Without any action from Congress, the Child Tax Credit will decrease from \$2,000 to \$1,000 in the coming years.

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Rep. Smith and Sen. Cruz Push to Help Working Families Afford Education Expenses

JANUARY 17TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Rep. Smith and Sen. Cruz Push to Help Working Families Afford Education Expenses

Washington, D.C. - Wednesday Congressman Jason Smith (MO-08) and Senator Ted Cruz (TX) introduced the Student Empowerment Act, which would expand the use of tax-free 529 College Savings Plans to allow families to save for K-12 education expenses.

Eligible expenses would include tuition, books and instructional materials, tutoring expenses, fees for exams related to college admissions, and educational therapy for students with disabilities.

“The Student Empowerment Act will help working families afford everyday K-12 education expenses and plan for their children’s future,” said Congressman Smith. “Education is a huge driver of unexpected expenses, and expanding access to 529 savings accounts will make it easier for parents to afford an education tailored to their child’s unique needs. I thank Senator Cruz for his partnership in making education more affordable and upholding individual liberty in education.”

Additionally, the Student Empowerment Act would allow all families to use tax-free 529 savings accounts, regardless of where their children receive their education. It would change current law, which does not permit families to use 529 savings accounts for homeschool expenses.

“Under the Student Opportunity Amendment, homeschool families were wrongly and cynically excluded by Senate Democrats, leaving them ineligible to utilize the expanded usage of 529 savings accounts,” Sen. Cruz said. “This bill re-includes homeschoolers, and

empowers every family with access to an education that truly fits their child’s needs. I am proud to champion school choice with Rep. Smith and am hopeful my colleagues will move swiftly to empower all students.”

The Student Empowerment Act builds on Senator Cruz’s Student Opportunity Amendment included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which expanded 529 account availability for K-12 tuition expenses.

Similar legislation authored by Congressman Smith and Senator Cruz passed out of the U.S. House last Congress, but unfortunately was not taken up by the United States Senate.

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