



Gibbons Capitol Report  
May 25, 2006

### **Honoring our Veterans**

Many of us are excited for the holiday weekend to begin, but it is important to take time to honor our veterans on Memorial Day. My family will take time this Monday to recognize the sacrifices so many soldiers have made. But I am also proud to share with you some of the legislation we were successful in passing that will help improve the lives of Missouri veterans and their families.

### **Protecting Missouri Families' Rights to Peaceful Funerals**

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to serve as governor for four days while Gov. Blunt and Lt. Gov. Kinder were both attending to business outside of the state. During this time, I had the honor to sign into law a bill that protects all Missourians' rights to a peaceful and decent funeral. It prohibits picketing and protesting of funeral services from one hour before the funeral service to one hour after the service. A later bill also places a 300 foot distance requirement on any funeral protests.

My colleague, Sen. Charlie Shields, sponsored the measure after a vocal and unruly crowd of religious protesters from Kansas willfully disrupted the August funeral services of Edward Lee Myers, a specialist with the US Army killed by a car bomb on July 27 in Samarra, Iraq. His parents, wife and children had to endure a disgraceful display of hatred. Since the law has passed, the Kansas group has threatened, but so far has not picketed any more military funerals in Missouri sparing soldiers' families from these inappropriate displays.

### **Military Relief Fund**

Every year when you prepare your Missouri state income tax form, you will now notice an option on the first page of the forms to donate to the Missouri Military Family Relief Fund (MMFRF). The MMFRF provides conditional emergency assistance to military members and their families. The fund is established to make Quality of Life and Medical Based Grants during periods of financial hardship. This fund is available for members and families of the Missouri National Guard and to Missouri resident members and families of a Reserve Component who have been called to active duty as a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks for thirty consecutive days or more. If you are a military reservist, national guard member or family member, visit [www.moguard.com](http://www.moguard.com) or

[www.mmfrf.mo.gov](http://www.mmfrf.mo.gov) for more information. To donate to the MMFRF, check the box on the front page of your tax return form.

### **Veterans' Organizations**

This November, you will have the opportunity to vote for a ballot provision that would exempt all veterans' organization from state property taxation. Most tax assessors in our state view veterans' organizations as tax exempt, but a few have determined that veterans' organizations are subject to it. The law is unclear. Voters will have an opportunity to clarify the law by voting this November.

Also, a provision in the eminent domain reform law we passed provides relocation costs of up to \$10,000 for any veterans' organization that could be displaced by the use of eminent domain. This will help guarantee that any veterans' organization that may be uprooted would be able to reestablish in their communities.

### **Improving Veterans' Lives**

We also passed several other bills that remove red tape to help veterans receive the benefits they deserve. Senate Bill 701 removes a provision that required recipients to repay educational assistance if they ended their military affiliation within three years after they ended their study. House Bill 1552 allows a homeless veteran to use the post office box or voice mail address of certain charitable or religious organizations on applications for federal or state assistance, as long as the organization is willing to provide an address to the homeless veteran for his or her use. Before this bill, homeless veterans were caught in a catch 22 because they had no address or phone number to provide on these applications. And finally, House Bill 1762 exempts a person who presents proof of permanent disability from the United States Veterans Administration from the four-year certification requirement for renewal of disabled license plates making it less burdensome for them to renew their license plates.

My father is a combat veteran of World War II. He suffered many losses and was severely wounded himself as he fought alongside other young men to help destroy the evil that was unleashed on the world. In his quiet way, it has been clear to me from an early age that our American soldiers have made substantial sacrifices and continue to make substantial sacrifices to protect our freedom and our future. So, this Monday, take a moment to say thank you and pay your respects to our America soldiers who protect the world and make America a safe and wonderful place to live and raise our families.