



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



Room 433 - State Capitol Bldg. - Jefferson City, MO 65101 – Contact Barbara Mustoe Phone: (573) 751-2306

**Week of Feb. 5, 2007**

## **Veterans' Goals are My Goals**

---

JEFFERSON CITY — This year, I was newly appointed to serve on the Pensions, Veterans Affairs and General Laws Committee. As the panel's name indicates, the well-being of those who bravely serve our country is a main focus.

The 2006 General Assembly approved several measures improving the lives of veterans, including appropriating state funding for more beds in veterans' homes, a 4 percent pay increase for state workers at the homes and an 8 percent pay raise for nurses. But we still have more work to do this year.

Every man and woman who courageously defends the tenets of democracy through military service earns the right to be eligible for residency in a state veterans' home should they ever need it. Unfortunately, last year's funding increase wasn't enough to fully staff the veterans' homes, meaning the progress we made by providing new beds and financing renovation projects was not as significant as we had hoped.

Currently, the average occupancy of the seven state-run veterans' homes is 1,161 residents. That means 14 percent of available beds are left empty and useless. The beds will remain open, and the waiting lists will continue to grow, unless the state Legislature allots enough funding to allow the homes to meet their staffing needs. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee as well, I will do my best to see to it that our state budget reflects our commitment to bettering the lives of those who help preserve our freedom.

We will also consider increasing state funding for the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Grant Program. VSOs help veterans obtain their rightful federal benefits. The most recent statistics show that \$664 million was injected into Missouri's economy by veterans receiving their benefits. The Veterans Association estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 veterans now living in the state are eligible for but not receiving veterans' benefits. Legislation is being heard in our committee to increase from \$750,000 to \$1 million the cap on funds enabling VSOs to process claims when veterans aren't receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. Senate Bill 287 will help give back to those who have already sacrificed so much.

-MORE-

I consider the priorities of the veteran community to be priorities of mine. I will keep you posted as to the progress of these bills. With more than half a million veterans living in Missouri, I am honored to now be directly involved in representing their interests in the state Legislature.

– END –

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper  
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate*