



November 14, 2008

Paying Tribute to America's Veterans

Throughout our nation's history, America's service men and women have courageously answered the call to defend our freedom, to aid our friends and allies, and to stand firm against aggressors. We can never fully repay the debt of gratitude we owe to the more than 1 million Americans who died in service to this country or the more than 1.4 million who were wounded. We can, however, recognize and thank the 24 million veterans still living today by taking the time to honor them and their unimaginable sacrifices.

Veterans Day, celebrated November 11, is marked by the cessation of fighting seven months prior to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended World War I on June 28, 1919. This armistice between the Allied nations and Germany took effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, making the celebration of Veterans Day every year on November 11, regardless of the day of the week, a meaningful and deliberate act.

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 to be Armistice Day. This day was primarily set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after the country had seen the greatest mobilization of military members in its history during World War II and with the Korean War still very fresh in people's minds, President Eisenhower signed legislation changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day to recognize all American war veterans.

As it is inscribed on the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., the words "freedom is not free" could not ring more true. The cost of freedom was paid for by the blood, sweat and tears of America's veterans and their families, the often forgotten element in the story of the nation's struggle against tyranny, from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism. We truly owe our veterans' families an incredible amount of gratitude for the sacrifices they, too, had to endure.

On November 11, it was our privilege to say "thank you" to all of America's veterans, to let them know that we appreciate them for their service and honor them for their sacrifices. They each were responsible in some way for helping to keep peace in the world and have since passed the torch on to all of the active military members serving in countries around the globe—our future veterans.

Few veterans will boast about their service, though their courage speaks plainly. As we dedicate one day to serve them, they spent their lives—and for some, gave their lives—serving us. Let us never forget it, or them, and let us always remember they are the reason why we are able to continue living in the greatest country in the world, enjoying the freedom not afforded to so many others.

As always, I welcome your ideas, questions and concerns about Missouri government. You may contact me at the Capitol as follows: (573) 751-2234, jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov or by writing to Senator Jack Goodman, Missouri State Capitol, Room 331, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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