



Honoring Missouri Veterans & Military Members

JEFFERSON CITY — There was some very good legislation passed during the 2009 legislative session designed to have a positive impact on the lives of active and retired military members in our state. While we may never be able to truly repay the sacrifices of our veterans, military members or their families, these measures will serve to help them keep more of their hard-earned income and will recognize and honor their dedication, service, and fortitude.

One of the most important measures to benefit veterans — passed in [House Bill 82](#) — would allow veterans to receive a 100 percent income tax exemption by 2016 on their military benefits. The exemption would increase by 15 percent annually beginning in 2010 until it is fully implemented in 2016. It also removes the age requirement, allowing all Missourians receiving public retirement benefits — including veterans — to take part in the income tax exemption. I believe a state income tax exemption for any military retirement income is the right thing to do, and I'm very pleased the measure was passed.

The General Assembly also approved an omnibus military bill ([House Bill 427](#)) containing several measures to benefit our military members and veterans. They include:

- Adding four members to the Missouri Veterans Commission, two members from the Senate and two members from the House of Representatives. In each chamber, one member would be chosen by the majority and one by the minority to ensure bipartisan representation on the commission.
- Allowing a dependent of a military member who resides in Missouri and whose parent is assigned to a permanent duty station in Missouri to be eligible for in-state tuition at state colleges and universities.
- Establishing an interstate interchange designation program to honor fallen Missouri heroes who have been killed in action while on active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq on or after September 11, 2001.
- Allowing veterans displaying Congressional Medal of Honor, Prisoner of War, Purple Heart or Silver Star special license plates, or Bronze Star placards, to park for free in metered parking spaces upon the approval of the city.
- Requiring all court orders to be temporary regarding child custody or visitation while an individual is in active military service and deployed out-of-state.
- Designating May 1st of each year as Silver Star Families of America Day. Silver Star Families supports and assists wounded or ill service members and their families.

We may never truly understand the depth of sacrifice many of our veterans and active military members have made or continue to make on our behalf. But by recognizing them in these ways, we hope they realize their importance to Missourians, who appreciate their efforts to protect us and all U.S. citizens from threats to our freedom and safety.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

###