



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer  
18<sup>th</sup> Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the  
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**Capitol Office  
(573) 751-7852**

# In Memorial

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JEFFERSON CITY – What does the word “patriotism” mean to you? If I were to ask you if you felt patriotic, what would you say? When did you first get that excited feeling in your heart as the flag passed by during a parade or the national Anthem was sung? More than likely you were first aware of these feelings back in grade school when you learned the Pledge of Allegiance or sang “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.”

Memorial Day reminds us that without patriotism we would have no heroes to honor today. Oliver Wendell Homes called this “our most sacred holiday” and urged that “we do not ponder with sad thoughts the passing of our heroes, but rather ponder their legacy – the life they made possible for us by their commitment and pain.”

Ours is a nation whose independence was won by those in the armed services. And ours is a nation whose freedoms have been continually protected ever since by the brave men and women serving our country.

One can look to the history books to get a sense of the enormous debt we as free people owe those we send off to war. But perhaps no better lesson serves than to turn on the evening news or read the day’s paper. Right here, today, thousands of American men and women are defending the tenets of democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan and a host of other hotspots around the globe.

Our military men and women are making progress in these conflicts that, left unchecked, would surely boil to where even the notions of open societies and free people were vaporized.

It’s also clear that much remains to be done in prosecuting the war on terrorism.

And we know in our heart of hearts that preserving an enduring freedom is a mission whose work will never reach a point where it can be considered done.

The dangers remain forever present.

The "Memorial" in Memorial Day has been ignored by too many of us who are beneficiaries of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. Often we do not observe the day as it should be, a day where we actively remember our ancestors, our family members, our loved ones, our neighbors, and our friends who have given the ultimate sacrifice:

- **By visiting cemeteries and placing flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes.**
- **By visiting memorials.**
- **By flying the U.S. Flag at half-staff until noon.**
- **By flying the 'POW/MIA Flag' as well (Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act).**
- **By renewing a pledge to aid the widows, widowers, and orphans of our fallen dead, and to aid the disabled veterans.**

Since the Civil War, we have had Memorial Day in which to honor those whose lives were forever frozen in time so that our nation might live to see another day under the light of freedom and the empowerment of choice. This year, especially, let us give thought each day to those taken away, and offer a prayer to all our fallen left behind.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at [wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov), or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.