

Week of March 2, 2009



Senator David Pearce – Serving Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties

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Giving Back to Our Veterans

It is difficult to comprehend the sacrifices our military men and women have made and continue to make, whether they are currently serving overseas, stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base or fought in a past war. Those who have served this country—and their families—have given of themselves selflessly to protect our great nation and ensure the freedom that we cherish. Although we can never fully return the favor, we can make life a little easier for our veterans by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned income.

Two years ago, the General Assembly passed House Bill 444, a bill that eliminates taxes on any Social Security or public pension benefits for Missourians age 62 and older who do not exceed a certain income cap. These individuals included teachers, firefighters, police officers, federal employees and veterans. Before the bill passed, state government was unfairly double-taxing these groups. They paid taxes when they originally earned their income and then again at retirement. Now we have started the process of getting their money back to them. In order to do this, we implemented a strategy that phases-in the tax exemption over a period of six years. In 2009, we will reach the halfway point where 50 percent of the exemption will be complete. By the end of 2012, the full exemption will take effect.

While the passage of HB 444 was a great first step, I believe Missouri veterans should see a complete tax exemption on their retirement income sooner rather than later. I am sponsoring legislation this session that speeds up the exemption process for veterans by authorizing an income tax deduction for 100 percent of any military retirement income immediately upon retirement. This deduction would take effect starting with the 2009 tax

year. This is very important to our friends at Whiteman Air Force Base when they retire and consider which state to live in upon retirement. [Senate Bill 334](#) has been referred to the Senate Veterans' Affairs, Pensions and Urban Affairs Committee and is scheduled to be heard soon. I will keep you updated on the status of the bill as it moves through committee. I also plan to carry the similar House bill once it comes to the Senate.

On a separate but related note, I am also sponsoring [Senate Concurrent Resolution 16](#), which urges the U.S. Air Force to select Whiteman Air Force Base—right here in the 31st State Senate District—as the headquarters for Global Strike Command. This program amounts to a major organizational shift within the Air Force, and will take control of all the branch's nuclear missions, most likely by the end of 2009. SCR 16 was passed unanimously on the Senate floor on March 5. From there, it goes to the House for their consideration.

Whiteman is currently one of six bases under consideration to serve as headquarters for Global Strike Command, which was designed to revive the Air Force's nuclear operations. If Whiteman is chosen as the headquarters for this exciting new program, it could mean big things for the 31st District and Missouri as a whole. Establishing western Missouri as a national security headquarters would create more jobs and a boost for the local economy. Air Force officials have said they will make their decision by June.

We must continue to support our military—active and retired—and this includes passing consequential legislation that will impact their lives in a positive way. I urge my colleagues in the General Assembly to support these two important pieces of legislation. As long as I am in the Senate, I will continue to work to serve the interests of all Missourians who have served our country in the military.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. Because we are here to serve you, we look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

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