

Week of April 27, 2009



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[Honoring Our Veterans and Military Members](#)

The brave men and women who fight for our freedom and protect us at home and abroad deserve our utmost respect and gratitude. Though we may never be able to truly repay the sacrifices both they and their families make to keep us safe, we can do our part to improve their quality of life by creating effective legislation that will make a difference to them and their loved ones. We can also continue to acknowledge the service of our veterans by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned income.

This week we worked on two bills that would make a positive impact on the lives of active and retired military members who make their home in Missouri. The first, [House Bill 427](#), was an omnibus military measure that I handled on the Senate floor. I am pleased my colleagues in the Senate voted to pass this multi-faceted legislation and send it back to the House for final approval. Some of the key provisions of HB 427 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, regardless if the parent leaves the state.
- 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 licenses 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.

I am also handling [House Bill 82](#) in the Senate, which was recently passed by the Senate Veterans' Affairs, Pensions and Urban Affairs Committee where I serve as a member. It allows for a state income tax exemption for any military retirement income. Two years ago, the General Assembly passed House Bill 444, a bill that gradually eliminates taxes on any Social Security or public pension benefits for Missourians age 62 and older who do not exceed a certain income cap.

While the passage of HB 444 was a great first step, it still doesn't offer a complete tax exemption to all Missouri veterans for their retirement benefits. For example, under current law, receiving an exemption on Social Security benefits requires that the exemption on public retirement benefits be reduced dollar for dollar. The new bill would allow veterans to receive a 100 percent income tax exemption by 2016 on their military benefits, regardless of their Social Security exemption. The exemption would increase by 15 percent annually beginning in 2010 until it is fully implemented at 100 percent 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.

We cannot truly comprehend the depth of sacrifice many of our veterans and active military members have made and continue to make. From those serving at Whiteman Air Force Base right here in the 31st Senatorial District to the deserts of Iraq, these valiant individuals stand strong to protect our way of life whether they are active duty, National Guard or reserve forces. We should make an effort every day to recognize and honor their dedication and fortitude.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. 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.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senate District.

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