



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Honoring Those Who Served

JEFFERSON CITY – I hope you took some time during the long Memorial Day holiday weekend to thank those who have served our country and to remember those who gave their lives in defense of our freedoms. The “Memorial” in Memorial Day has been ignored by too many of us who are the 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 sacrificed so much to defend the freedoms we enjoy today.

I had the honor of attending a Memorial Day service at the Grandview Cemetery in Hannibal, and then I visited with veterans at the American Legion Post 55 in Hannibal. Listening to their stories, you get a sense of awe when you realize they were willing to give their lives in defense of our country and the ideals it represents. These ordinary men and women answered the call of their country and showed enormous courage in the face of unimaginable danger. We all owe them our gratitude and our support.

I joined Gov. Nixon at the Mexico Veterans Home on the eve of Memorial Day weekend, where he ceremonially signed several bills which will benefit Missouri veterans and their families.

House Bill 1524 establishes preferences for businesses owned by service-disabled veterans when bidding on contracts with the state or local governments; calls on the Secretary of State to make it easier for military members deployed overseas to request and receive voter registration applications and absentee ballots; and allows the governor to present several different service medals, ribbons and citations for Missouri National Guard members who have served with distinction during federal deployments or states of emergency.

House Bill 2262 allows the Missouri National Guard to establish the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy, which focuses on building life skills for high school dropouts so they can earn their GED. When the program operated in Missouri from 1999 to 2002, more than 800 at-risk youth graduated. The federal government will fund 75 percent of the reinstated program.

House Bill 1893 increases funding for the Veterans Commission Capital Improvement Trust Fund by redirecting a portion of gaming revenue to the fund. Those funds can be used for improvements to veterans' homes, cemeteries and other related expenses.

Finally, House Bill 2147 expands the A+ Schools Program by allowing the child of a retired member of the military to qualify for the program if the retired member relocates to Missouri within a year of retirement, as long as the student meets other program requirements. The A+ Schools Program provides reimbursement for tuition, books and fees for students who attend any two-year public community college or any vocational or technical school.

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

To all of our veterans – God Bless you and thank you for your service.

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