

Week of September 27, 2010



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Serving Missouri Veterans

For 10 years now, the 31st District has been fortunate to serve as the location of one of Missouri's seven state veterans homes, the Warrensburg Veterans Home. This week, I participated in an event to celebrate the decade of service this top-notch facility and its staff has provided to the community and to our brave Missouri veterans.

The men and women who fight for America's freedom, safety and prosperity deserve our utmost respect and gratitude, and when we are able to provide them something in return, we shouldn't hesitate to do so. For those veterans who need special health care services and live in the Show-Me State, our veterans homes offer the extra care and support they need.

Over the years, the staff of the Warrensburg Veterans Home has demonstrated Missouri's commitment to support and respect veterans by providing the long-term care they deserve. The more than 46 local, regional and national excellence awards the home has received in the last decade are a testament to the great care that is provided on a daily basis to the nearly 200 veterans who currently live there. Since the first resident was admitted on September 26, 2000, the compassionate people who take care of Missouri's heroes have worked to make this facility a place where veterans feel comfortable, cared for and appreciated, even through the smallest tasks. Over the last 10 years, the staff there has provided more than 4.5 million pounds of laundry, 54,000 grilled cheese sandwiches and 1,800 recreational and sightseeing trips for our veterans!

It's also important to note that the Warrensburg Veterans Home could not provide the high level of care and service it does without the involvement of the countless volunteers who have contributed more than 191,000 volunteer work hours over the last 10 years. We are so fortunate to have such an involved and caring community. As the home expands, with construction slated to begin soon for the new solarium and chapel, community participation will become even more important.

Here in Missouri, we work to make sure our veterans know that this state values their sacrifice, and lawmakers have an extra duty to create laws and policies that will improve

the quality of life for our veterans and current service members and their families. During the 2010 legislative session, my colleagues and I successfully passed several meaningful pieces of legislation recognizing the importance of active and retired military members who make their homes in Missouri, including bills to:

- Streamline the absentee voting and registration process for Missouri military personnel serving overseas.
- Exempt the dependents of retired military members who move to Missouri within one year of retirement from the A+ Schools Program's three-year attendance requirement.
- Require state and local government entities to give a measured preference to service-disabled veteran Missouri businesses when selecting contractors for any job or service.
- Increase funding for the Veterans Commission Capital Improvement Trust Fund (VCCITF) by directing a percentage of funds received from gaming to the VCCITF.

Missouri has a long history of military participation and citizens who have been willing and able to fight for our country and protect our freedoms. We would not be able to stand here today without the brave service men and women who were willing to fiercely protect the values and ideals they believed in. While we cannot repay their sacrifices, we can work to make their lives during and after military service a little easier, including providing excellent facilities for veterans who need additional care. Approximately 870 veterans have received top-notch care and support from the Warrensburg Veterans Home in the last decade, and knowing the level of commitment the staff here has to serving our veterans, and the support from the community, I feel confident that the next 10 years will be even more successful.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office with your 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 Senatorial District.

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