

COMMENTARY -- Saluting Service and Sacrifice

Written by Sen Chuck Grassley
Friday, 23 December 2011 14:43

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Saluting Service and Sacrifice

by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley

Iowans will welcome friends and family home for the holidays this month to celebrate the joys of the season together. Kids home from college and relatives from far and near will gather under one roof to enjoy each other's company.

For U.S. military families, the return of 45,000 troops from Iraq arguably wins the best homecoming present of the season. Nearly nine years after the war started in March 2003, American troops have fought to defend freedom and protect U.S. national security interests in and around Afghanistan and Iraq. The men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line in service to our country have earned a debt of gratitude from the American public.

The American public cannot afford to become complacent about the mission and contribution of the U.S. military. The military serves in many cases as the world's first and last line of defense for freedom, liberty and democracy at home and abroad. Ultimately, it is the courageous members of the U.S. Armed Forces who serve on the front lines to protect our American way of life here at home.

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Iowa has a long-held tradition of honoring members of the Armed Forces and the citizen-soldiers of the National Guard and Reserves. Local communities and veterans' service organizations for generations have organized celebrations for hometown heroes deploying to and returning from military service, as well as memorials for those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

In Washington, I work to square the needs of a strong U.S. military and the sacrifices of the taxpaying public. Recently, I've worked to raise awareness and increase federal help for our members of the Armed Forces who suffer from service-related mental health conditions and injuries. An increasing number of veterans return from the battlefield with invisible wounds. In 2007, I worked with Iowa lawmakers to pass the "Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act" in honor of an Iowa veteran who took his own life after returning home from active duty.

Seeking to help military veterans re-enter the civilian workforce, I worked to help secure passage this year of a federal tax incentive that would make it easier for small businesses to hire qualified military veterans. In recognition of their skills and service to our country, I've also called upon federal agencies to hire qualified military veterans. As a result, the IRS has hired thousands of vets in the last four years.

During this season of joy and celebration, let's remember to salute the service and sacrifice made by America's veterans and members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Thanks to their commitment to duty, honor and country, America continues to be the land of the free and home of the brave.

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