

November 2005 - A Veterans Day Message to Our Children

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By Congressman Jerry Moran

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One year ago this week, Kansas experienced a great loss as two Kansans were killed in the War in Iraq. Sergeant First Class Clinton Wisdom and Sergeant Don Clary were the first Kansas Army National Guard soldiers to die in combat since the Vietnam War. Both were members of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery based in northeast Kansas. On November 8, 2004, these Kansas Guardsmen were providing protection to a convoy in Baghdad when a suicide bomber sped toward them. Without hesitation, these men placed their own vehicle between the bomber and the convoy. Both were killed in the explosion. Their actions saved many lives that day.

Major Austin Hamner, a soldier who served alongside these men, wrote a letter from Iraq to his three daughters at home. It was published in his hometown newspaper last year during the week of Veterans Day. The soldier wrote:

Hello girls, I have something very important to tell you about this war and the meaning of Veterans Day. Sometimes on Veterans Day, we lose connection to the real meaning of the day. Sweethearts, I've just returned from the memorial service that was held for two very special soldiers. These two men were taken from this world on Monday of this very week protecting our unit.

Sooner or later all of us will pass on from this life, but those who willingly give their lives for others certainly are true heroes. Jesus once taught the world that, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That is one way to know that these two men were real-life heroes.

I am so looking forward to seeing you again and being together. I will give you extra hugs and kisses because I know that there are children who will not get them from their dad who was taken away on Monday.

Love you,

Papa

Like the soldier who wrote his daughters, it is our responsibility to ensure that our children and grandchildren appreciate the sacrifices made by those serving our country and never forget these heroes. Each year, as the percentage of our population who has worn a uniform declines, fewer and fewer individuals and families have a personal connection with the military. Instilling in America's youth an awareness of the contributions of veterans past and present becomes even more important.

Even though many Americans will not serve, knowledge of those who have served is essential. The traits we learn from veterans - courage, honor, duty, sacrifice, patriotism, heroism - are characteristics that make us better citizens. Their everyday acts inspire us to reach beyond our limits. Their losses remind us to live a life worthy of their sacrifice. And through their service on our behalf, we remember the obligations we owe. These are important lessons only a veteran can teach us.

It is our task to share with our children that Veterans Day is more than a day off school or a department store sale. It's a day to honor the more than 250,000 veterans in Kansas and the 25 million nationwide, as well as their families, who stepped forward to defend our country. It's a day to pay tribute to those who have given so much, to those who continue to give and to those who gave all so that we may live in the greatest country in the world.