

# 11/08/2006 Honoring Generations of Veterans

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By Congressman Jerry Moran

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Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of Kansas' most famous sons and one of the most beloved military leaders in American history, once reflected on the day he began his military career at West Point. Eisenhower recalled, "A feeling came over me that the expression 'The United States of America' would now mean something different than it had ever before. From here on it would be the nation I would be serving, not myself."

It is remarkable that from the Revolutionary War to today, America has been blessed by men and women who - like Eisenhower - were willing to put on a uniform and put country before self. On Veterans Day we pay tribute to those who have given so much and who continue to give on our behalf.

Among us today are 24 million Americans, including 250,000 Kansans, who have earned the title veteran. They come from many generations. These veterans have fought in the deserts of the Middle East, the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Korea, the beaches of Normandy, the sands of Iwo Jima, and even the trenches of World War I. Kansas is the proud home of Smith County veteran Jud Wagner, who at 107 is our nation's oldest living World War I veteran with overseas service. He is the oldest Marine and one of only 17 living U.S. veterans from the Great War.

Today, we know veterans like Jud Wagner as our community leaders, our teachers, our neighbors and our family members. The responsibility they learned through military service has not been forgotten. They continue to be examples of courage, honor, duty and sacrifice, influencing our lives and making us better citizens.

Those who served in our country's past wars gave us not freedom, but the opportunity for freedom. The battle to preserve our liberty must be fought by every generation each day. A new generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coastguardsman are now fighting to secure our country. This November 11th, as our nation observes Veterans Day, I ask that Americans pause to remember and honor the generations who stepped forward to answer the call of duty and defend our way of life. They deserve our lasting gratitude.