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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, November 11, 2016

NOVEMBER 13TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Honoring Our Nation's Heroes

As citizens from all walks of life turned out to cast their votes and make their voices heard on Election Day, it was an important reminder of the freedoms that have been fought for and defended throughout the centuries by the many brave men and women who have rightfully earned the title of hero.

It's on Veterans Day that that we pause as a nation to honor those who have put their love of country above all else. It's a time to thank those who have risked life and limb to ensure Americans can vote on Election Day. It's a time to salute those who have fought to protect us from the scourge of tyranny and injustice. It has been said many times before, but it must be said again on Veterans Day; we owe these brave souls a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid. That is why it's imperative that our gratitude and respect for their service be sincere and abundant.

However, even with the commitment so many of us make to honor their heroism, many of our veterans continue to live without any sort of recognition of their selfless service. Think about these numbers for a moment. Each night here in this country there are more than 50,000 homeless veterans sleeping wherever they can find shelter. In fact, veterans make up more than 55 percent of the homeless individuals on our streets. Consider too that the suicide rate among those who have served is 50 percent higher than those who

have not. And even here in Missouri, where we make a concerted effort to do all we can for our veterans, we still see approximately 2,000 veterans on a waiting list to receive care at one of our seven veterans homes.

The good news is that Missouri is a state that is willing to do all it can to help the more than 490,000 who call our state home. Our economy is boosted by the nearly 50,000 veteran-owned businesses within our borders. Our efforts to invest in our veterans through job training and new educational opportunities saw more than 14,000 veterans go back to school and receive more than \$55 million in assistance in 2014. Missouri has also worked to help veterans overcome substance abuse problems by creating Veterans Treatment Courts. And thanks to these efforts, not only have thousands received the training they need to get better, higher-paying jobs, but we've also seen the suicide rate among veterans in our state drop by 37 percent over the last few years.

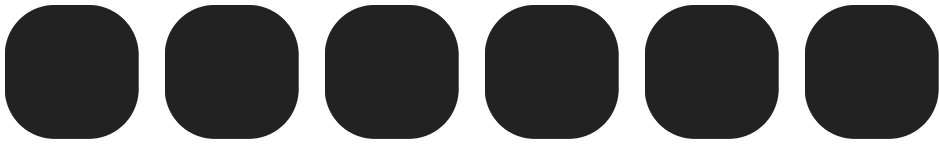
These are all positive signs and reasons we should take pride in our state and the way we acknowledge and treat our veterans. But there is always more we can and should do. That can be as simple as expressing your gratitude by saying thank you to someone you know who has served, or as involved as donating your time or money to charitable causes that work with our veterans. And for the legislature, it means continuing to find policy solutions for the issues faced by our veterans.

On Veterans Day I ask that we all make the promise to treat our veterans with the respect they have earned. And let us vow to do that not just on one day each year, but on each and every day. Their extraordinary accomplishments have created an extraordinary debt that we must consistently work to repay. Their sacrifices have given us the nation we love, and their commitment to service has protected the freedoms we all hold so dear. For this and for all they have done, we must always be grateful.

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