

Howard Marklein: Reach out for Veterans Day

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 11, 2020

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November is traditionally a month of gratitude. We reflect on the blessings in our lives and the people we love when we gather for Thanksgiving. While our celebrations this year may be smaller, or even virtual, it is still very important to connect with each other as we kick-off the traditional holiday season.

It is also very important, now more than ever, to reach out to the veterans in our community. Nearly 6% of Wisconsin's veterans live in the counties of the 17th Senate District. We have 21,615 residents who have served in the military! We are blessed to have you in our communities.

Wednesday, November 11, 2020 is officially Veterans Day. While we may not be gathering for the annual ceremonies and remembrances throughout our communities, we still have opportunities to recognize and remember the men and women who served in our armed forces. We do not need a ceremony to say "thank you."

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I will start. To all of the Veterans who live in the 17th Senate District - THANK YOU! - for your service, sacrifices and bravery. Thank you for telling us about your experiences and teaching the next generation about honor and the true cost of freedom. Thank you for being living examples of what it means to be an American.

As your State Senator, I promise to work hard for you. I am seeking ways to ensure that all Wisconsin veterans receive the health care, services and benefits that you have earned. I strongly support the work of our County Veteran Service Officers

(CVSOs) and supported keeping the local model of service delivery in the last state budget. I know that you need services in your home county, where you live. I fought the plan to regionalize services, which would have forced most of the veterans in the 17th District to drive to Madison for services.

We also improved the way a grant program works to help CVSOs serve the veterans in their individual counties. In addition, I worked with my colleagues to create and support several programs to help veterans who want to start businesses, pursue higher education and relocate in rural Wisconsin. The Veterans Employment and Entrepreneurship Grant Program was signed into law in 2016. This program distributes \$400,000 annually to organizations that help veterans create and build businesses.

But I know there is more to do. With each new generation of veterans, we recognize new challenges and opportunities. Our state has been working hard to recruit recently retired veterans to live in Wisconsin to grow our workforce. We want veterans to bring their strong work ethic, skills and character to our companies! We'll keep working on it.

Now it's your turn: I challenge you to join me in reaching out to veterans you know this week. Give them a call. Send them a card or a handwritten note. Drop some extra dollars into the collection jar for the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Marines who will be handing out poppies at the grocery stores throughout our communities. Just check-in and say "hello". The bottom-line is make sure that they know you haven't forgotten them.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is very important to reach out to each other to protect our mental health. A quick call or note may make all the difference. Reach out to a veteran this week!

— Marklein, R-Spring Green, represents the 17th Senate District.