

Palzewicz campaign: Military veterans appreciated, then forgotten

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Brookfield, WI – “Thank you for your service.” This phrase has been uttered millions of times, but the reality behind it tells an entirely different story. It can be hard on the ears for returning veterans and not taken as the compliment people might think it to be. Tom Palzewicz, running for Wisconsin’s Fifth Congressional District seat in Washington, is a U.S. Navy veteran and knows this all too well.

Yesterday, it was reported that President Trump referred to members of the armed services as “suckers” and “losers.” Tom Palzewicz, as a veteran, was shocked by this report. “We should honor those who make sacrifices for our country. I condemn this blatant disrespect from the President and hope that Scott Fitzgerald will do the same,” Palzewicz remarked.

Palzewicz was an electronics technician aboard a nuclear submarine during his six-year enlistment in the 1980’s. Like most veterans, he does not want or need to be thanked for his service, but what Palzewicz does want for veterans is to have the proper support program when they return. Military personnel returning from deployment in Afghanistan, Iraq, or any armed conflict area require healthcare services beyond routine care. They are sometimes sent to fight without the necessary services they will need upon their return.

“It boggles my mind in this country that there is a focus on appreciating veterans, but there is not a focus on taking care of veterans’ needs that definitely arise from their service,” said Palzewicz. “Congress has to authorize the funding of veterans benefits, and it has to come out of the current budget for us to do whatever it is we’re going to do. Take the Iraq war, which was a declared war. There was an actual vote in Congress. What should have happened is an allocation based on the number of troops going into combat.

“There should have been advanced funding for the needs of these veterans. But that doesn’t happen. We have some kind of war and then we scramble after the war to take care of veterans. Everybody loses focus. The whole dynamic has to change.”

As a submariner, Palzewicz had to deal with the challenges of being in a confined space for prolonged periods. The Navy had to assess his ability to perform his duties under those circumstances before assigning him to the sub. Men and women who go into combat are expected to perform, but a myriad of psychological issues can occur when they return home, such as PTSD.

“That is where the disconnect occurs. We thank them for their service, but we forget them when they need us,” said Palzewicz. “Every single service person upon discharge should be encouraged and have access to mental health professionals. Even if you’re just dealing with the transition of moving from being a veteran, being in the service, to being a civilian. That transition alone is extremely difficult for most. Add on top of that, if you have any PTSD or you have any, anything that has happened because of your service time, it really needs to be dealt with sooner rather than later. And what we have is we have a system that says when you are in the military or leave the military, you’re not supposed to talk about your mental health challenges.”

Palzewicz believes all Americans can express their appreciation for veterans by ensuring their needs are met, long before returning home. That requires a re-examination of the healthcare system for returning vets to provide the services they will need are in place and ready for them when they come home. That is the best way of saying, “Thank you for your service.”