

# OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

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Dear OCPA Member:

Thursday, November 13, 2008

On November 11 our nation celebrated Veterans Day. That is a special day for all citizens to honor those who have served their nation in uniform. It is a time to say thanks to the men and women of our armed forces for their service and commitment to protecting our liberties and our way of life.

Originally, that date observed the Armistice which the Germans signed at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918, ending World War I. In 1954, "Armistice Day" was expanded from its original meaning to recognize all veterans (both living and dead) and therefore was appropriately renamed Veterans Day.

The number of military veterans in the United States totals 23.6 million (347,000 in Oklahoma alone); 2.9 million served in World War II (1941-1945); 3 million served in the Korean War (1950-1953); 7.9 million served in Vietnam; 5 million served during the Gulf War (1990 to present) and 6.1 million in peacetime.

Several years ago my nephew, Josh Hall, decided his Eagle Scout service project would be assembling little boxes full of personal care products for patients of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Oklahoma City. Some of the items were donated by local merchants while others Josh purchased himself. As he and his fellow Scouts presented each "care box" many tears were shed by grateful old soldiers who couldn't believe they were being remembered in such a thoughtful way. Americans should never forget those who have sacrificed so much and so often.

It's our veterans who are most aware of the many threats to our nation and to the prospects of peace throughout the world. Many are first hand witnesses to the harsh realities of warfare. Some have lost limbs as well as close friends in battle. The sacrifices that have been made are too numerous to calculate and at times too difficult even to contemplate. And through it all as one General noted, the only amount of land America has ever asked for was enough to bury our dead as they fought overseas.

So I don't really understand those I see at times standing on street corners with signs that read "Give Peace a Chance," "Peace, Not War," or "Honk for Peace!" It's as if they honestly believe that "peace" is assured by wishful thinking and utopian world views. When you ask any military veteran what they think of such demonstrations, they will invariably say, "I fought for their right to peacefully protest too."

As John Stewart Mill adeptly noted, "The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

It is the character of those in uniform that speaks to the heart about what is good in America. That sense of patriotism, that regard for our Constitution and our governing authorities, and that innate respect for our civilians and their differing viewpoints is apparent each time you look at the faces of veterans saluting the American flag. It's then that I realize we should make the observance of Veterans Day everyday, all year long. After all, it is freedom itself they have helped to preserve.

Until next time . . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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