

*ANOTHER VIEW: Our veterans and their families sacrifice so much*  
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**HEADLINE:** ANOTHER VIEW: Our veterans and their families sacrifice so much

By the turn of the year, the war in Afghanistan will be the longest war United States service members have ever been called to serve in. In addition, service members in Iraq and Afghanistan now serve in combat longer than any before them. Our men and women in uniform experienced the horrors of Vietnam for a relatively short, single-year tour of duty compared to today's three- and four-year tours, marred by improvised explosive devices and car bombs that eliminate any moment of rest for years on end.

Newspapers report deaths, grave injuries and amputation statistics on a regular basis. However, nothing is "regular" about these statistics, especially when it is your son, daughter, father, close friend or even your mother who will not be returning home -- or who is one of the lucky ones who gets to return home, only to carry the wounds that too many years of combat service have inflicted.

We mark Veterans Day in the comfort won for us through the blood and sweat of our service members, past and present. One good night's rest and the promise of one less day in the hellholes of Iraq and Afghanistan are often all they ask. At great personal and financial sacrifice, our citizen-soldiers leave their jobs at the hospital, factory, bank or local school because duty calls. They sacrifice their safety and security for our safety and security. Let us pause to appreciate their heroism and wisdom. Let us also honor our nation's promise to help care for their loved ones and provide them the opportunity to return to the job they were forced to leave when duty called.

Our fathers were called to defend the freedom we cherish. Thankfully, neither of us was required to do the same. They taught us that the time our families lost because duty called was the price of freedom. As was true at our founding and remains true today, our citizen-soldiers are people of courage, integrity and honor.

America must start to do more for our returning wounded men and women. No citizen-soldiers should serve their country and return to a futile search for appropriate care for their wounds or be forced to live in a homeless shelter because of financial or medical needs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2008 Homeless Assessment Report to Congress found that 12 percent of the more than 1.5 million homeless people in the United States are veterans. Having sacrificed their safety and security for our safety and security, we owe those who return that promised security and medical care.

This Veterans Day we sit in the comfort of our homes because, as Churchill said, "rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm." As we honor our veterans and take comfort in the security and freedom that their blood earned for us, take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices our soldiers make in winning for us the status as the most democratic and diverse nation in the world. Honor the men and women who stand in service of our country. Take a moment to pray for them and give thanks this Veterans Day.

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