

Mr. President, This debate on emergency funding for our military wouldn't be complete if we did not begin to address the crises military families face at home as well as abroad.

I am proud that the Senate has passed my two amendments -- one to allow families to stay in military housing for a full year after the death of a spouse, the other to ensure all military families receive \$500,000 in total death benefits when a loved one dies in service to America – but I am also deeply moved by the stories I've heard from across our country in the last 24 hours about the challenges to military families every day.

Yesterday, I sent an email to Americans asking them to share their stories – of husbands and wives, sons and daughters, neighbors and friends who serve their country with courage but have been left on their own by our policies here at home. Within hours over 2,000 Americans sent me their stories. They took time out of their busy days to share their stories on the hope someone would listen. Their voices must be heard in the halls of Congress. Today, I enter a small sample of their stories into the Congressional Record to prove we are listening, and hope that today's victory marks a new beginning --and that soon Congress will answer all their prayers and pass a comprehensive Military Families Bill of Rights.

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Alan Neville – Aberdeen, SD

This is a story about my own family. In January 2003, my wife was called to active duty with her Army National Guard unit. She was inactive status and a mere 7 days from being completely out of the military when she was mobilized. She went from being a civilian attorney to a Sergeant/E-5 administrative clerk at a significant loss of pay. At that time, I became a single parent to four young children for one full year. In August 2004, I too was called to active duty with my Army Reserve unit. I went from being a university professor to being a Sergeant First Class/E-7. Once again, our four children were without one of their parents during their critical stages of development. We've done our part, now it's time for others to do their part. The burden placed on the National Guard and Reserve forces seems extreme. The morale among more seasoned soldiers, those with 10 to 20 years of service, is not good. Many are getting out of the military at the first available moment.

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Jack Cooper – Corpus Christi, TX

This is a story about a young couple in Austin, Texas. The husband works for Home Depot and was called up in the Marine reserves. There are two young children, both girls. One of the girls has Job's Syndrome. Home Depot did not continue the family's insurance.

They had to go out and pay ridiculous rates for additional health insurance to cover the child. That was money they could not afford because Home Depot did not pay his salary

while he was gone. The child was in the hospital for much of the time the father was in Iraq. The mother had to take off from teaching to stay with the child in the hospital. She used up all vacation and sick time, and then was docked pay for lost time.

We are not taking care of our soldiers or their families.

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Doris Fulmer – Albuquerque, NM

I just lost my husband on February 11. He was a navy pilot for 28 years. He paid on my SBP for years, and now I can hardly get by, and waiting for the increase in October is going to be difficult. I will have to sell my house to survive. It appears they are waiting for us to die to...

Not enough is being done for the active duty veteran. I don't see how the administration can be so tight with the veterans and their loved ones while we wage war in a foreign country and pour in millions of millions of dollars.

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Stephen Cleff – Haddenfield, NJ

This past Christmas, my uncle was called into service in Iraq. He has served this country in Vietnam and when he returned continued to serve as a policeman.

My uncle is 58 years old. This is an example of how stretched our armed forces are because of the current policies of the President and his followers.

His current service not only required that he miss Christmas with his family, including his father who was very ill, but more importantly, it required that he miss his father's funeral. His wife is now alone in their house, waiting for his return. I do not know the specifics of their finances, but I do know that they relied on his income as a police officer.

I wonder how easily our current majority leaders would send people into combat if they had to survive on the same benefits.

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Christopher Perkins – Burnham, ME

Here in Central Maine we have a young man, Fred Allen who, like myself, volunteered to be a paratrooper and served in both Afghanistan and then in Iraq.

He was grievously wounded in both legs in Falluja, a name we all know from the news. He spent a good deal of time in the hospital getting back on his feet and continues his healing and therapy at home. According to his mother he is receiving little in the way of compensation or direct help.

I can draw a strong parallel here with my personal experience in the Army.

I enlisted in 1967 at the height of Vietnam and also went Airborne. I served with the 3/506th Airborne Infantry "Currahees" of the 101st Airborne Division in 1968-69. I was a radio operator and then a machine gunner in the field. I received the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Jump Wings, Air Medal and the Bronze Star with "V" Device for heroism in ground combat.

After my return home my best friend was killed in Vietnam and I began to have serious problems with nightmares, depression etc.

The army's answer at the time was a "resignation for the good of the service" Sign here and you can go home.

In the 1980's there was a greater awareness of the problems veterans were having and programs were developed, but for over 15 years we were on our own. Many good soldiers didn't make it.

Thanks to Senators Mitchell and Cohen I was finally able to receive PTSD treatment and treatment for arthritis and a disability award.

It is my greatest hope that our younger brothers will not have to wait so long for their help. I once wrote a critique of the PTSD program at VAMROC, Togus, Maine for Senator Mitchell. This was my final remark.

"We who placed our lives in the balance, and were not found wanting, ask for no more than that which is our due, to be treated with dignity, honor and respect."

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Pamela Goers – Romulus, MI

My stepson is in the Navy stationed in Washington State. He finds it so extremely hard to take care of his family on his pay that he was willing to volunteer to go to Iraq [again] because of the bonus offered and how much his family would benefit from it. This is just wrong. The military men and women put their lives on the line for us; the least we can do is ensure that their families are provided for.

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James Tate – Coon Rapids, Iowa

I have 2 sons in Afghanistan, deployed for 1 year duty with the 168th Infantry Iowa National Guard. The younger has had the misfortune of having his marriage disintegrate in his absence and he has no assurance that his construction job will be available on his return. The older has a contract detassling business for 2 Iowa seed corn companies. This is a very seasonal business and Mike has suffered a \$60,000.00 loss of income from the business. In his absence his wife and I had the responsibility of keeping the business going but the companies involved were fearful that in his absence we would not be able to handle the number of acres he normally completes. Consequently they cut the allotted acres by 1/2. Much of the fixed expenses of running such an operation remain the same regardless of the total acres performed. Normally the business returns approximately \$70,000 above expenses. Last summer the return was less than \$10,000.00. Besides, there remains a question of whether or not the companies will make the normal acres available in the future or if they will give them to the other contractors that filled the void this past summer.

My wife and I raised and educated 11 law abiding, tax paying American citizens. This administration has created a situation that for the first time in nearly 70 years leaves me ashamed of what my country is doing in the world.

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D. Bottoms – Oregon, WI

My best friend Kurt Jerke, age 31, is a captain in the Indiana National Guard. He was a Ph.D. graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences at Purdue University. In his final year for his Ph.D. degree, he received orders to leave for Afghanistan. At this time, his wife Katie had just giving birth to his first son. Kurt left when his son was only two months old. Katie has been in a daze ever since Kurt left for Afghanistan with managing her job, daycare and caring for her child, while maintaining there house all as a single parent. They're son, Cade, is now a year old. He's a walking, talking, cute little guy. Kurt missed his son's first year and Kurt still has no end in site. Kurt has no idea when or if he's coming home. Kurt has no idea if he's staying in Afghanistan or if he's going to Iraq...

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Sandy Fox – Cleveland, OH

As a 6-year member of the Ohio National Guard, my son was within one month of completing his obligation when he was notified that he could not leave the service. He is now in Baghdad, much to the dismay of the entire family.

He has two sons, ages 2 and 4. He discovered the week before he shipped out for Iraq that his wife is pregnant with a daughter.....the first female in our family for quite a long time. His wife is a nursing student who also has a part-time job. Not only has his

departure caused emotional upheaval for the entire extended family, he was the major “breadwinner” for his nuclear family.

Knowing that she could not afford to keep up payments on their apartment, their vehicles, etc., without his income, she approached the military for assistance. She was told that there was nothing they could do for her....that she would have to turn to her in-laws for help to sustain her and her family while her husband was serving our country.

In summary, this poor pregnant woman is living in the basement of her in-laws’ home with her two sons because the military and our government turned their backs on her. Their atrocious treatment of the military personnel, their families and our veterans belies all their public rhetoric about family values and moral integrity. It's disgraceful! I don't know how they sleep at night.

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Kara Block – Jamaica Plain, MA

My brother is a lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He has been on two tours of duty to Iraq and is about to deploy for the third time, this time to Afghanistan.

Since 9/11, our family has been continually shadowed with the threat of losing my brother on one of his deployments. He was on the first wave of the invasion in March 2003 as part of the 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance that forged ahead to Tikrit. On that first Iraq deployment, we did not hear from our brother until it was time for his battalion's return to the States. He called my parents via a satellite phone before heading back, to ask them to wire \$200 for a phone card to call home from the ship that carried them homeward. The U.S. government does not pay for its troops to keep in touch with their families while deployed.

On his second deployment to Iraq, my brother called home to ask for a particular kind of field binoculars, as those that should have been standard issue to him had not been provided. These binoculars cost my parents \$500, and were obtained only with great difficulty [incidentally, per Newsweek in 2003, the average American troop spent over \$2000 outfitting himself/herself with safety and field gear]. For many other military families, the purchase of this necessary safety-enhancing instrument would be prohibitively expensive.

In January 2004, when much media ado was made about the lack of armor in the Humvees contributing to many unnecessary roadside fatalities from IEDs, President Bush made a statement assuring all military family members that the troops would receive proper armor by March 2004. However, upon their return, several Marines Lieutenants informed us that the armor did not arrive till June/July 2004; despite the battalion's mission being to escort military and civilian convoys--a highly dangerous duty that took them all over IED-infested roads of Iraq. The Marines also cited a shortage of flak-

jackets on their first deployment.

The ordeal of enduring those long, dangerous deployments (especially cognizant of the lack of armor/equipment) and perennially bracing for bad news is too great to recount here. Needless to say, these last few years have taken an extensive toll on the health and happiness of this family, which I consider as much of a sacrifice for this nation as the military service of my brother.

Despite the outcry of his family against such things as his inadequate training for the jobs with which he was tasked, lack of armor and other safety-enhancing equipment [and despite the acknowledged fact that he and his men faced death at every moment at the behest of a president who lied us about the reasons for war], my brother has volunteered to extend his time in the Marines and to deploy for a third time in two years. Were I a poet I would better describe my boundless pride in him and all our troops. Heartbreakingly, he and all the other troops who give so much for this country ask so little in return.

We celebrate the heroism our troops with homecoming parades, yellow ribbons and imposing bronze memorials. But we as a country [especially in Congress] should put our money where our mouth is and increase combat pay, grant our Veterans adequate health care and other benefits, and take care of the families of the fallen or injured (e.g., access to good education for their children). THAT would be a meaningful demonstration of our respect and appreciation for their sacrifice. Our troops deserve no less.

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Theresa Grof – Agawam, MA

My husband was activated in 2001 after 9/11. His pay was so low as a technical sergeant in the US Air Force Reserves that we are now 20,000 dollars in debt and have no way out. My husband has served his country many times, he is a Gulf War Veteran, Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran, and an Iraqi Freedom veteran. He has 14 years in the United States Air Force reserve, but the pay is so low and the benefits being slowly eroded away that he no longer sure if he wants to make it to 20 years. He sees his unit falling apart and wants to stay but with cuts in benefits and our debts mounting (we have also both attended college on our GI Bills during these activations) that it just does not seem feasible to stay in the reserves any longer. His unit is losing more and more longtime reservists every week. The unit is becoming undermanned and when they get a new recruit, which is not very often, the person is not well trained enough to really help. This problem of losing long serving military men like my husband will affect the military's mission. Retaining these men is important and passing a bill to help those of us so in debt because of continuous activations should be a major priority at this time. I am very proud of my husband and I see his determination to keep serving his country but soon there will be no reason to stay.

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Mark Vaughn – East Greenwich, RI

I am in the US Army Reserve and have been deployed 4 times in 8 years. I have missed almost 36% of my daughter's life while deployed. When not deployed I am an adjunct college professor and, until recently did not make enough to be able to afford health insurance. The only time I and my daughter were covered was while I was deployed. While I believe that it would be cost prohibitive to provide all Reserve and National Guard soldiers health benefits, it would be the right thing to do to provide them a health plan which they could buy into (co-pay). This plan would cover them and their families whether or not they were deployed. In addition to providing the families of our soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen a benefit it will also help keep them healthy should they be called up. I believe that it would also provide a strong incentive for recruiting. Just a thought...

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Heidi Behr – Orlando, FL

I work as a social worker at a local elementary school in Maitland, Florida. We have some kids in our school whose parents are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. I know of many families (some at our school and in our community and elsewhere around the country) who are struggling to make ends meet financially because they are not receiving adequate compensation while their loved ones serve in the Armed Forces. Many of the families who have members in the National Guard are dealing with the double blow of loss of pay while also now not having their husband or wife at home. I think it is criminal that our government calls these national guards up without compensating the family for their lost wages and insurance. If a family was dependent on this guard member's insurance through their civilian job, many times those families have now lost health insurance. This is not right and needs to be taken into account by the government when they decide to call these men and women back into service.

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Carrie Philpott – Eugene, OR

My son joined the Marine Corp in November of 2002. He enlisted with the hopes that he would be able to fulfill his dream of attending college and earning a BA degree in Criminal Justice. Other than the GI bill, no other funds are available to him for higher education. He has just spent a month at home with me after being injured while serving our country in Iraq. He had the time to study his military benefits package and look at what university he would be able to attend. Imagine his disappointment and frustration to find that his GI bill will only cover 1.75 years of an undergraduate degree at a state university that doesn't even offer a degree in his field of study. He has now returned to his unit to complete his 4 year enlistment only to be told that he will have to go back to

Iraq in Aug. '06.

Along with his physical injury, my son had nightly nightmares, screaming out visions that could only have come from his battle experiences. I wonder what else he will have to endure for the price of an education?

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Kathy Hartman – Loveland, CO

This is a story in reverse to what you are seeking. I have a nephew serving in Iraq who works as a security guard for a private contractor. He receives approximately \$18,000 per month and has all of the finest in equipment and security. He received his training as a Ranger in the US Army but now serves as an employee of a private contractor.

My question is, why isn't every soldier employed in Iraq able to receive the salary, benefits and equipment that this "soldier" does? Why have we contracted some of this war out to the highest bidders, using our tax dollars to pay some of our soldiers a more-than-decent wage while our "grunts" fight and die at minimum wage? I do not understand this inequity except of course for the fact that we have now set up wars and military expenses to benefit large corporations even more than they have benefited in the past.

Don't get me wrong. While I do not believe in this war, I do believe that all those in harm's way should be equitably compensated, trained and outfitted. I would rather that all soldiers be compensated at a wage befitting the horror and danger they experience.

Clearly the private contractors are able to pay generous compensation in addition to making generous profits. This is wrong.

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Nada Smith McLeskey – Columbus, OH

I was married for 28 years to my first husband who for 21 years served our country in the United States Air Force. He continues today serving our country by teaching your high school students leadership by serving with the JRAFROTC Program in Salt Lake City, Utah. Our daughter served for 6 years in the Utah Air National Guard and today our son serves our country in the United States Air Force in the Special Forces branch. Our son has already seen one tour of duty to the Middle East. He is married and a father of 3 children. He is an unlisted service member. His wife was forced to stop working because their childcare far out weighed the income she could bring home and the subsistence allowance program was cut by the Bush Administration. They now live in base housing but none the less, their income for a family of five is roughly \$2000 per month. By the time their bills are paid, there is little left for them to buy groceries or enjoy the luxury of maybe going out to a movie or to eat. I send them what I can per month to help out. I

know what it is like to serve our country and have to live on an extremely tight budget. My daughter in law would love to work so they can pay off their debts and have extra money, but with 3 children under the age of 6 it is impossible as childcare would eat up all her wages. Thank you.

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Doug Brewer – Tacoma, WA

My daughter is best friends with a 16 year-old whose father is a reservist. He was deployed to Iraq, leaving behind a 12 year-old autistic child, who needs the care of two parents to even have a semblance of a quality of life. The father is in Mosul, a very dangerous place, ostensibly for a year, but we all know how that length of time has tended to expand. I can't tell you how many tears this family has shed over the father's safety, the one parent's frustration of raising an autistic child (among two other siblings), as well as the financial pressures of having the main bread-winner gone. Why? For what purpose?

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Katie Laude – Beaver Dam, WI

My husband is a reservist currently serving in Afghanistan. He served his 8 years of military service after getting an ROTC scholarship for college. After finishing his two years of being a company commander he went on IRR. After September 11th he was given the advice to join back with his unit or risk being “cross-leveled” into another unit where he wouldn't know the troops.

Well, as it turns out, he did join his old unit again but was still cross leveled to unit in St. Cloud, MN (we live in southern Wisconsin). We have three boys (ages 9, 6 and 1). I had our third son after my husband had left. To make it worse, I have NO family support group unless I want to drive over 5 hours to the unit in Minnesota. I have had to hire out virtually everything around our house (lawn, snow removal, home maintenance, etc). After taking a year leave from my job after the baby was born, I felt I had to go back to work. So I am now working full time as a teacher and raising three kids with no husband.

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Linda Brown – Bunker Hill, WV

Our daughter is in the MD Air National Guard as well as a full time college student. We still carry her on our medical insurance. She has been deployed twice in the last 3 years each time putting her education on hold. Her boyfriend works full time at the WV Air National Guard but does not have medical insurance. My daughter became pregnant but is unable to marry her boyfriend because he does not have medical insurance. There is no way she could marry him and then have the baby with no insurance. I advised her not to,

what if something happened to her or the baby? We cannot afford to pay out of pocket and we make too much money to qualify for Government aid. We would like our daughter to be married and she would like to be also. Her boyfriend has checked into private insurance but at \$800 a month they can not afford it. My daughter served in Qatar in Operation Enduring Freedom as did her boyfriend. He flies almost every week doing missions for our government but is not offered insurance! It makes me so mad, most of our government officials don't care about healthcare for others because they will never have to worry about themselves.

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Gail Mountain – Gloucester, MA

Like a lot of stories about abuse and mistreatment, despite the specific issue surrounding that abuse and mistreatment, proving it is very difficult.

Nonetheless, I would like to share my suspicion of mistreatment of my nephew as a member of the Air Force reserve who lost his job in the U.S. upon his return from a 3-month assignment in Kuwait, perhaps a year ago.

He had been getting subtle messages for months from his employer that his need for time off to accommodate his military training was not appreciated.

When he returned from Kuwait, he was “let go” under what I believe to me the guise of his inability to do his work.

He believes, and so do I, that he lost his job because of the time it took for him to serve his country.

He will never be able to prove it, but I think we need to also find a way to insure this does not happen to those who choose to serve our country, yet still need to earn a living.

This young man continues to diligently working on his master's degree and to take every opportunity to get as much military training as he can so he can become a part of the investigative branch of the Air Force because he loves his country and because he wants to participate in the safety of it. I hope a part of your work will be to also insure that our reserves and our national guard are taken care of by the country they choose to protect.

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Sarah O'Malley – Castine, ME

This story is of a man in a town near by, the nephew of a friend, a high school classmate. Harold Gray was in the National Guard, the 133rd Engineering Battalion from here in Maine. He was injured several months ago by a road side bomb, getting hit with shrapnel in the head and shoulder. Shrapnel destroyed his eyes and lodged in his brain.

Harold was in a coma for quite a while at a military hospital in Washington. His wife traveled to DC to be by his side, and his three young daughters are staying in their home community with family. Harold's wife is a manicurist with no benefits, when she doesn't work, she doesn't get paid. She hasn't been working for months now. In every store you go in around here, there is a coffee can with Harold's picture, collecting spare change to help support his family. This soldier's family is living off good will and spare change.

As a Guardsman, I don't know what kind of extended support Harold and his family can expect. The best case scenario for Harold's situation would be a full cognitive recovery, but with total blindness. This is however, extremely unlikely. Harold will live the rest of his life with shrapnel in his brain, and the severe cognitive deficit that goes with it, as well as the loss of this sight. As a Guardsman, not a member of the Army etc, I fear that his family will fall between the cracks, and through loop holes and bureaucracy not receive the benefits (however paltry) that regularly commissioned soldiers are entitled to.

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Jean Harris-Letts – Middleburg, FL

I am a physician in a town where many of my patients count on military benefits.

For Medicare recipients, most of the time both Social Security checks go for food and rent, while hopefully the service connected spouse will be able to get his or her medication from the Veterans Administration. The non-military spouse will have to get samples of meds or often go without.

My younger patients whose spouses are in the military are in an only slightly better position...It baffles me how anyone could countenance cutting military benefits in a time of war, when so much depends on morale.

The patients to whom I refer are not deadbeats. They are hard working people, who are just not being properly compensated, and find only twenty four hours in the day when they try to do more.

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George Cleveland – Milwaukee, WI

I am a Vietnam era vet with severe back pain, lumbar/sacral facet degeneration. I was completely independent when President Clinton was in office. When President Bush got in office and reduced V.A. funds. They took away my pain meds, which were 6-5mg Percocets and 2-10mg Oxycodone. It's gotten to the point that I can't walk with my grandchildren anymore. I'm 58 years old and poor with no other insurance I've talked to other vets with similar problems. We've basically been told that we are not worth the price of our meds. What's going to happen 40 years from now when the vets from Iraq still need help will they be forgotten to? Just go to any V.A. Hospital in this country and

talk to the vets sitting in the smoking area and ask. This will probably screw me pretty bad but at this point I just don't give a damn.

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Holly Ortman – Fort Benning, GA

My name is Holly Ortman. Not only am I a nurse in the US AF Reserves (inactive now), but I am also a spouse of an active duty soldier in the US Army and a mother of 4. I am highly educated and was working on my Practitioners Degree. I have always stood behind our government and its decisions, but as of late, I feel that my support is dissipating due to the government's lack of support for the military families and the military child. When our son was 6 months old, my husband was given orders to deploy to Afghanistan with the 10th Mountain Division. At the time I was an ICU Nurse manager at the local hospital. At this point in our lives, we only had 3 children. Due to the demands of being a mother of 3, one of which was only 6 months, and an acting single parent due to the absence of my husband, I had to step down as the nurse manager and work in the ER as an emergency/trauma nurse. This was very short lived because in the state of New York nursing is unionized, therefore everything works off of seniority. That left only night shifts open for me to work. Because finding a trustworthy person to come in at night and watch 3 children and get 2 of them ready for school the next morning is so difficult I had to totally resign my nursing position. Just so you understand the seriousness of this let me explain that before I resigned, our family income was close to \$4500.00 a month. Because I could not work due to the military deployment, our income fell to less than 1800.00 a month. This qualified our family for W.I.C., and other forms of public assistance, which we had never needed before, but desperately need now. During his deployment, my husband re-enlisted for another 6 years. He is a very patriotic man and he wanted to do what he felt in his heart was right. We toughed it out and my husband came home in May of 2004. Shortly after his return, we found out we were pregnant with our 4th and last child. He then received his orders for Fort Benning, Georgia. We relocated to Fort Benning and upon his First day of reporting and 6 months TO DO THE DAY of his return from Afghanistan he was told to collect his CIF gear, he would be leaving for Iraq by January and that they needed his combat experience over there. We were devastated, as the birth of our last child was due in February and we were hoping to financially catch up by me going back to work. Due to the fact that my pregnancy was high risk, he was allowed to stay behind until the baby was born. He is now leaving for Iraq this Saturday. My career, in a field that is in dire need of experienced people, will once again be on hold, and we will have to scrape by yet again due to the minimal amount the government pays my husband to leave his family and put his life on the line. I was so disappointed in my government when I heard that many wanted to decrease the deployment pay. We are barely making it as it is and without that pay we would literally be in dire straights. Now there is talk of decreasing the amount of the yearly raise to help the budget. Both of my oldest children go to a military school and it has been a God send. They have deployment groups for them and a counselor to help with the transition, which was very hard during the first deployment. These schools know how special a military child is. Now Donald Rumsfeld wants to shut down our military

schools. How much more can you people keep taking from us before you realize that we have nothing left to take? I cannot even repay my government student loan because I can not work because of his continual deployment and the government doesn't pay him enough to keep us above poverty level. My family has sacrificed so much and only keeps getting slapped in the face by our government. My family feels so used. I currently hold a commission as Major in the USAF IRR, which I am resigning, and I have told my husband, we will find him a way out. We just can't afford the price of your freedom anymore. I am sorry but fine speeches and big talk cannot put food on my table and bring my husband home alive. Thank you for this chance to share this with you.

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Richard Perez, Sr. – Las Vegas, NV

On February 10th, 2005 at 11:30pm in Al Asad, Iraq, we lost our only son USMC LCpl Richard A. Perez Jr.

His story is on www.richardperezjr.com website.

The heartache will never end. My wife Rosemarie who had been a senior sales agent for State Farm with the states highest sales totals for the past 4 years is devastated and has no more energy to even perform her job anymore because of the loss of our only son.

I, Richard A. Perez Sr., Battle with this problem daily, recently our son had signed with us on a very large home loan which we thought would solve all problems as we have rented for 20+ years and never owned a home.

We bought it with the pretense that Rich would help us with the home loan and to build upon his career and life with his own family as he was generating money in his management position at Jack in the Box restaurant. The house has not been built as of yet, but the looming cost of a home here in Las Vegas is skyrocketing and a big payment is due soon. We cannot afford to do this as our daughter is a student at UNLV another a student in High School aspiring model and actress and a third only 10 years old a gymnast in Henderson...all girls who lost their brother.

I personally have lost my job and find myself on unemployment getting 329.00 per week because I grieved too long and could not perform my job at the level expected.

Costs run high, but our family has been ruined by a war my son never intended on entering as he was a reservist and had goals and dreams of his own. We still have not even gotten our sons final report , we don't even know the details of what happened? 8-9 weeks ago... He was proud to be a Marine and we are proud of him, the little money the Government gave us has paid his college loans at UCLA and we are faced with the hardship of our lives being ruined, because of Iraq.

My whole family has suffered during the past 2-3 months since the accident but really the past 7-9 months we've been stressed and it has affected all that we do daily.

What a disaster, what a shame that my own land of liberty, land of the free has placed us in bondage for years to come and has all of us reeling as where do we go from here?

I am a 7th generation American. My family tree is American Indian, Spanish and Mexican from Los Angeles, CA. I grew up thinking my country was great, my forefathers defended my stance so we can live today. My very uncle Fred Perez sold airplanes to Iraq and Iran as he worked for Boeing in the 60-70s. My cousin lost a leg in the USMC in Vietnam. My Uncle lost an arm in Korea and my wife's uncle died on the shores of France during WWII. What happened to the American Dream? Why, when my family & son defended liberty, do we now suffer? People in NYC buildings were provided 2 million dollars each so they could adjust to their loss. Yes, they needed it, but we do too.