



- United States Senator -

Kent Conrad

North Dakota

September 2006

Dear Friend:

Our nation is facing difficult times, with Iraq continuing as a challenge, al-Qaeda still threatening the United States from hideouts in Pakistan, and the conflict in Lebanon edging the Mid East toward broader conflict. It is a reminder of how serious a responsibility our servicemen and women shoulder when they wear the uniform of our country. And it is a reminder of the sacrifice all of our veterans make while wearing that uniform.

Many of our North Dakota reservists and Guardsmen are returning from operations abroad and are joining the thousands of veterans and their families in North Dakota who, like you, were promised benefits by the federal government as part of their service to the nation. It is my obligation – and my honor – to work as an advocate for all veterans and make sure that the federal government keeps its promises to all of you.

This report should serve to detail several of the accomplishments we have made on behalf of veterans in North Dakota and around the country. Our nation has faced great challenges in its history, and prevailed. We have prevailed because of the resilience of men and women like you, who served with courage, dignity and honor. We will prevail again, and we will have our veterans to thank for that.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad

United States Senator

Project At Fargo VA To Be Completed

At the invitation of North Dakota veteran leaders and administrators from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Senator Conrad will participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony this fall for the \$12 million renovation of the Fargo VA hospital. The renovation of the building came at a time when many other states were losing hospitals and clinics. In North Dakota, Senator Conrad and the rest of the delegation secured funds to modernize the only VA hospital in the region.



Photo courtesy of ND DAV.

Disabled American Veterans State Commander, Warren Tobin, presents Senator Conrad with the "Going to Bat for Disabled Veterans award."

Five New Community-Based Outpatient Clinics Opening in 2006 and 2007

North Dakota veterans will have much better access to health care when the VA opens the doors on five new Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, also known as CBOCs. Following meetings between top VA officials and Senator Conrad, the VA announced plans to open clinics in Williston, Jamestown and Dickinson by September 30, and clinics in Devils Lake and on Grand Forks Air Force Base by the fall of 2007.

This is an exciting development for North Dakota's veterans. These new clinics will increase access to health care, decrease driving distances, and provide our veterans with the services they have earned.

Vet Center Enhancement Act

To help address the problem of access to VA health care, Senator Conrad also cosponsored legislation to provide as much as \$180 million to Vet Centers to help with the growing problem of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health disorders facing returning servicemen from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Vet Center Enhancement Act would enhance care and services provided through Vet Centers. The Senate passed this legislation unanimously and it has been referred to the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Health for consideration.

VetsRide Act

The VetsRide Act would establish a grant program to provide innovative transportation options to veterans in remote rural areas. This grant program would provide small grants to state Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) and Veterans Service Organizations to help provide transportation to VA medical centers. The VetsRide Act, which is cosponsored by Senator Conrad, has been referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs for consideration.

Rural Veterans Care Act of 2006

Senator Conrad was an original cosponsor of legislation that would provide \$20 million to expand access to VA health care for rural communities and establish an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Rural Veterans. The Rural Veterans Care Act of 2006 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs for consideration.



Senator Conrad meets with North Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars representatives in his Washington, D.C. office.

Honoring the Fallen

Senator Conrad met this summer with North Dakota members of the Patriot Guard Riders, a veterans-based motorcycle club, to thank them for their devotion to protecting the families of fallen soldiers at military funerals. The United States Senate unanimously adopted a resolution authored by Senator Conrad to com-



In May, Senator Conrad presented the Family of Master Sgt. Woodrow Wilson Keeble with a series of medals in recognition of the fallen soldiers distinguished service in World War II and Korea. For the past two years, Senator Conrad has been working to get Keeble's Distinguished Service Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor. The Secretary of the Army granted Senator Conrad's request and agreed to recommend Keeble for the nation's highest military honor.

memorate the service of the Patriot Guard Riders. The Riders attend military funerals where they stand shoulder-to-shoulder to form human shields, protecting family members from protestors from a radical Kansas church who have been picketing services.

Stolen Valor Act

The Senate is expected to pass Senator Conrad's Stolen Valor Act this September. The Stolen Valor Act will strengthen current laws against those who pretend to hold valorous medals, including the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Awards, the Silver Star, and Purple Heart, which they did not earn.

These imposters only cheapen the heroic acts of our country's brave servicemen and women. America's veterans deserve better. Senator Conrad's legislation calls for up to a one-year jail sentence for those who falsely claim to receive these medals.



Photography by Gail Mooney of Moonshot, Cummings, ND.

Senator Conrad presents Lance Cpl. Ben Lunak of Grand Forks, an Iraq War veteran, with the purple heart in recognition of his tremendous courage and sacrifice.

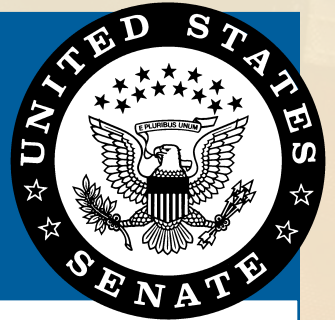
"It is my hope that this legislation will serve to honor the courageous heroes who have rightfully earned these awards. We must never allow their service and sacrifice to be cheapened by those who wish to exploit these honors for personal gain."

– Senator Kent Conrad, on the Stolen Valor Act.

“It is such an honor to work on behalf of North Dakota’s veterans. When our nation called, they served without hesitation. Now, we must fulfill our promise to them. I will continue to fight to enhance the quality of life of veterans in North Dakota and across the nation.”

— Senator Kent Conrad

Senator Kent Conrad’s Veterans Report



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