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State Representative TINA LIEBLING

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

NOVEMBER 10, 2005

Dear Friends,

This year, as we celebrate Veterans' Day, our thoughts are with the men and women from Rochester and across the country who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. No matter how we feel about the conflict or the reasons for going to war, members of the National Guard, Reserves, and active-duty military-our friends and neighbors-deserve our thanks and support. They and their families have responded to the call to duty with courage and determination.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the Minnesota House, I heard heartbreaking stories from military personnel and their families about the challenges they face here at home. One Guardsman told us how his family lost MinnesotaCare coverage when he was deployed, and how he spent precious free time phoning health insurance companies from Iraq.

We passed numerous bills this year to make life better for Minnesota soldiers and their families. For example, military pay earned while on active duty is now exempt from state taxes, and men and women called up for active duty are exempt from paying the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax on their personal vehicles during and 90 days after a deployment. And, like the GI Bill that helped my dad go to college after WWII, Minnesota will now pay 100% of the tuition for Guard members who attend a state college or university.

We also worked to address the needs of veterans who served in the past. We increased funding for outreach to underserved veterans so they can access the benefits they deserve. We provided \$5.4 million for construction and upkeep at the State Veterans' Homes and we funded a long-overdue WWII Veterans Memorial to be completed on the state Capitol grounds by fall 2006. Finally, we passed a measure that lets military families go back on MinnesotaCare without a lapse in coverage when their military health insurance expires.

We Minnesotans pride ourselves on our compassion and neighborliness. There is no better time to show members of the military and their families just how much we appreciate their efforts. I am pleased to help Minnesota become a more welcoming and supportive home to our veterans. They deserve our support and gratitude on Veterans' Day and throughout the year.

Warmly,

Additional New Military and Veterans Laws Passed by the State Legislature in 2005

- Re-enlistment bonuses for members of the Minnesota National Guard
- New *Support Our Troops* license plates, which will go to fund grants to military families and grants to veterans' service organizations
- Declaration of the month of May of each year as "Hire a Veteran Month"
- Probationary teachers ordered to active service will be considered to have consecutive teaching experience
- Expansion of the eligibility criteria for receiving survivor benefits under the Police and Fire Pension Fund to include active military service

Note: Most military issues come under federal jurisdiction, including base closings, mobilizations, pay and allowances, TRICARE health policy, the GI bill, and veterans hospitals.