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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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Honoring Our Warriors
by: Senator Larry Craig

*There are strong hands meeting, there are staunch hearts greeting-
A crying of remembered names, of deeds that shall not die.
A handful of old men?-Nay, my heart, look well again;
The spirit of America today is marching by!*
- from "Memorial Day" by Theodosia Pickering Garrison

Formerly known as "Decoration Day," Memorial Day was first designed to honor Union soldiers who had given their lives during the American Civil War. After World War I, the last Monday in May became a time to commemorate all men and women who have sacrificed their lives in military service. It is also a time to honor our veterans and those who are currently fighting, as well.

Today we find ourselves engaged in a war that calls brave Americans to the other side of the world to serve our country. Idahoans have shared and continue to share in the sacrifices of that war – our soldiers risking casualties or combat injuries, their families and entire communities enduring the impact of lengthy deployments. These sacrifices are made on behalf of a grateful nation as our service men and women demonstrate tremendous courage in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Not all Idahoans get to come home after being deployed in a combat zone. Many are not stationed at Gowen Field or Mountain Home Air Force Base. Many of Idaho's heroes serve on active duty in the Marines, the Army or the Navy, and those soldiers may return to a home base in another State. However, regardless of where they step off a plane and park their gear, we still thank, honor, and remember them as Idahoans serving their country. There are Idaho soldiers across the world doing remarkable things for the military, and they should be honored as American heroes.

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I recently had the privilege of attending an awards ceremony for Boise native, Captain Brian Gilbert, U.S. Army, who is stationed at Fort Benning in Georgia. Capt. Gilbert received the 2007 McArthur Leadership Award, which is given to Army, Reservists and National Guard members who demonstrate top leadership skills and actions. Fewer than 30 soldiers are recognized each year, and I was happy to express Idaho's pride in his achievement, as well as my sincere gratitude to Capt. Gilbert for his honorable and courageous service to our nation during a time of war.

This Memorial Day, I am pleased to be joining Idaho veterans in a ceremony to honor those who gave their lives in defense of our nation. Having spent most of my years in Congress working on veterans' issues, I am very aware of the sacrifices and the injuries that our veterans sustain in combat, and our nation's responsibility to respond to the needs of our returning veterans. Memorial Day is a time to honor our fallen heroes, but it also is a good time to reflect on the service of our active duty soldiers, as well as our veterans, and to let them know how much we appreciate their sacrifice and their willingness to protect our freedoms. Please pause this Memorial Day to remember our fallen heroes, thank our veterans and support our soldiers now in harm's way.