

THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor



TASK FORCE ON VETERANS' SERVICES

March 30, 2008

Community Leaders:

This past year the Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services developed a list of thirty-nine priorities for action (for an e-copy of the full report visit the Governor's website: <http://governor.oregon.gov/>). Establishment of the "Oregon Military Families Appreciation Day" tops that list. We hope this annual event will accomplish three goals: 1) shared learning – providing people an opportunity to learn and listen; 2) shared effort – through a symbolic act; and 3) an opportunity for fellowship – all aimed at breaking down barriers.

May 8, 2009 will be Oregon's first Military Family Appreciation Day. We are planning events in communities throughout the state – and we need your help. Volunteers in Bend, Canby, Independence, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Medford, Newport, Salem, Springfield, The Dalles, and Warrenton have already stepped up. We have team leaders for each of these communities and are moving forward: they will need your help.

Events will share an education and discussion segment, a symbolic tree-planting/community service project, and a picnic. Every community will tailor the outline to their specific circumstances, but there will be an easy-to-follow pattern to make it easier for facilitators and participants. Partners include the Association of Oregon Counties, the League of Oregon Cities, the Oregon School Board Association, and a plethora of veterans' service organizations as well as non-denominational faith groups. This is a united effort; it is a unifying cause.

In early May, Oregon will send 3,000 men and women from the 41st Brigade Combat Team overseas – most for duties in Iraq. It is the largest single mobilization of National Guard troops since World War II. This deployment is in addition to the 7,500 guardsmen and 3,500 Reservists that have already deployed for service abroad since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began. On top of that, each month we receive over 500 recently discharged veterans returning home to after their active duty careers.

According the U.S. Census, well over 350,000 veterans live in Oregon. We have veterans from conflicts spanning the past seven decades – and veterans of every era require and deserve our assistance, help, and love. May 8, 2009 is our moment to come together and celebrate service to community and to country; a time to learn from each other and reach out to those that may not know how to ask for help. We want this event to form a framework of connections that can help military families in the months and years ahead.

If you are interested in helping out – either by assisting a neighboring community, or by leading the effort in your own – we need you! I know from my own time as a mayor in Monmouth, local leaders can get things done. With your assistance, we can strengthen existing relationships and build new ones – connections that may save a life, make a deployment easier for a service family, or just bring a smile to a neighbor concerned about the upcoming deployments.

Please take the time to consider this opportunity. Thank you for your consideration on this matter. If you have any questions or would like additional information, call me at 503.949.6378 and/or email me at paul.evans@state.or.us.

Sincerely,

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Paul Evans
Task Force Chair