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GUEST COLUMN

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HONORING OUR MILITARY MEN AND WOMEN

BY STATE SENATOR TOM PATTON

Throughout our country's history, we have often been reminded that liberty rarely comes free of sacrifice. Without question, this lesson is best illustrated through the service and contributions of our military men and women. From the battles of Lexington and Concord to the beaches of Normandy and most recently on the sands of Iraq and Afghanistan, the will and fortitude of the American Soldier has long kept our citizens safe.

As Veterans Day draws near, we once again reflect on the memories of those who have fallen in name of freedom. Through their actions and selflessness they have forever forged an indelible place in the hearts of all Americans. After all that they and their families have sacrificed, we must do all that is possible to share their stories and ensure that they are never forgotten.

Approximately 24 million veterans reside throughout the United States, according to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs. More than 890,000 of those former soldiers now call Ohio home and they continue to serve us in a great many ways. We see them everyday in our factories, our classrooms, and the offices where we work. Though they have now settled into the trappings of civilian life, they will forever be liberty's truest and most courageous defenders.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed a bill that named two dozen of Ohio's highways and bridges after fallen soldiers. Senior Airman Alecia S. Good, of Broadview Heights, was among the 31 Ohioans that were commemorated. A member of the 92nd Communications Squadron, she died on February 17, 2006 as the result of a helicopter crash while deployed overseas. The bill, which Governor Kasich signed into law in June, has now made a portion of Interstate 77 in Broadview Heights the "Senior Airman Alecia Good Memorial Highway" so that future generations will grow up knowing of her service to both our community and country.

Whether it is through naming a memorial highway or just sharing a simple 'thank you,' we should always be searching for new ways to show our appreciation to those who have fought on our behalf. With that said, I ask that you set aside a few moments this Friday to show your appreciation for the men and women who, time and time again, have never failed to place country before self. After all, without their service, this life that we all hold so dear would hardly be possible.