Vietnam Veterans Memorial Banquet

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: BAUCUS

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VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL BANQUET

Thank you Larry, and thank you everyone for the invitation to join your cause tonight.

You know they say "time heals all wounds", but I think in the case of many Vietnam veterans, that isn't always true.

The wounds of war forever influence people's lives, both physically and emotionally.

No war divided this country more; and no group of veterans has been understood less.

We Americans have an obligation to Vietnam veterans -- to all veterans. And we must remain committed to the special needs and concerns of those who faced the drama of Vietnam.

We must remain committed to the memory of those to whom your memorial will honor. And we
MUST BE EQUALLY COMMITTED TO THOSE MISSING-IN-ACTION OR PRISONERS-OF-WAR. THEY MUST NOT BE FORGOTTEN!

AND WE MUST NOT FORGET THOSE WHO CAME HOME.

OUR GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTERS FOR VIETNAM VETERANS. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT SERVICE FOR VIETNAM VETERANS, AS YOU WELL KNOW.

THE GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING TO CLOSE MANY OF THESE CENTERS AND MOVE OTHER TO VA HOSPITALS.

SUCH A MOVE WOULD SERIOUSLY REDUCE THE SPECIAL QUALITY OF SERVICE THESE COMMUNITY VETERANS CENTERS PROVIDE.

LET ME TELL YOU THAT I AM COMMITTED TO KEEPING LOCAL READJUSTMENT CENTERS OPEN FOR VIETNAM VETERANS.

I AM A SPONSOR OF THE LEAD SENATE BILL TO KEEP READJUSTMENT CENTERS SERVING VIETNAM VETS;
Pat Williams is leading the charge in the House of Representatives.

These centers are important to vets. Their continued operation in communities should be a reflection of our concern for Vietnam era vets and their needs.

Those needs include medical concerns unique to the Vietnam vet as well. I believe our government must continue seek answers to the effects of Agent Orange and help those veterans who need medical assistance — this issue is not closed.

That is why I sponsored legislation last week to grant compensation benefits to any Vietnam veteran with non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

There have been plenty of studies; it is now time for the government to meet its obligations to Vietnam veterans.

In a way, the American public is beginning to meet its obligations to Vietnam veterans, too.
Tonight is an example of that. It is a celebration, a beginning.

A new awareness has swept our country -- an awareness of what the Vietnam Veteran means to our country --- and a better understanding of their sacrifice and commitment.

There have been several important films made about Vietnam. This fall, a series patterned after the film Platoon will be in network television.

The story of Vietnam veterans and what they experienced in Southeast Asia is now being told through our mass media -- film & television.

This is a significant development, because it means your experience is now becoming part of the American psyche.

The process started several years ago in Washington.
IT STARTED WITH A SINGLE VIETNAM VET, WHOSE DREAM LEAD TO A VISION...AN IDEA...A PLAN...AND FINALLY THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL ON THE MALL IN WASHINGTON.

THAT MEMORIAL SPARKED A WAVE OF PUBLIC INTROSPECTION ABOUT VIETNAM. AND ABOUT YOU, THOSE WHO SERVED.

FEW CAN VISIT THIS MEMORIAL AND NOT BE TOUCHED WITH EMOTION; NONE CAN UNDERSTAND THIS MEMORIAL AND NOT BE MOVED BY ITS MESSAGE.

AND ITS MESSAGE IS CLEAR: LIKE LINCOLN AND WASHINGTON, WHOSE GRAND MONUMENTS EMBRACE THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL ON THE WASHINGTON MALL, VIETNAM VETERANS ARE TRUE PATRIOTS.

MANY MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE; ALL DESERVE THE HIGHEST RECOGNITION FOR THEIR SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY AND IT'S PEOPLE.

IT IS THEREFORE NOT JUST AN HONOR AND PRIVILEGED, BUT A RESPONSIBILITY IN WHICH I GLADLY BEAR, TO EXTEND MY FULLEST SUPPORT FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A MONTANA STATE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL.

As our nation came together to support that moving statement to Vietnam veterans in Washington, so too must Montanans join hands to recognize and remember our own men and women of Vietnam.

Vietnam remains a great question in American history. Tonight is but one of many efforts to find an answer.

Thank you for inviting me tonight. It is a true honor to be among patriots.
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