

On Veterans Day, we recognize all those who have so honorably served our nation in uniform. They've made incredible sacrifices for us, and we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

There is another group for whom our veterans make great sacrifices, and that is for one another. When the men and women who serve our country take off the uniform, they start serving in our communities, in schools and workplaces, through their families and veterans organizations all over Southern Missouri. But they also seek out the natural support group – the company of other veterans – veterans who know the strain of battle, the difficulty of adjusting back to civilian life, and the challenges of a very trying transition.

Our veterans in Southern Missouri are fortunate to come from wonderful, loving families. They have lots of friends. They are known and respected in our communities. They are smart and professional. But sometimes, another veteran is the only person a veteran feels comfortable asking for help.

And there are plenty of brothers and sisters in arms to ask. Our servicemembers' families are full of veterans from every conflict, at every age, from every branch of service, with every imaginable background. If you have a worry, a concern, a problem, a question – some other veteran in our region has heard it, seen it, or had it, too.

Like no other place in the country, veterans in Southern Missouri go out of their way to seek out newly-returning veterans and servicemembers.

They are available in our communities, they visit our VA hospitals, they reach out to those who are just coming home. They are the most in-touch band of compatriots you have ever met, well-meaning and well-organized.

They may not look soft and sensitive – I'm thinking of the leather-jacket wearing, motorcycle riding, tall and strong Vietnam Veterans who ride in our Patriot Guard. These tough guys, however, are the kindest souls you will ever meet. They will make time for you.

When a family is grieving with loss, these veterans give comfort. When a soldier is suffering with a wound, they are there. When it is time to honor our flag, these veterans come through. And when the community can use a patriotic presence – in our schools, at our veterans cemeteries, at a public event, on a day of remembrance – you can count on them. They are doing it for all of us, yes, but most of all they are doing it for one another.

Through this kind of service, our veterans have enacted a long, proud history of service to our country. They keep alive the traditions of patriotism and the practice of liberty in our great land. With Americans like these leading the way, anything is possible for our communities and our country.

This is why I love our veterans. They take care of each other, and Veterans Day reminds us of the many, many ways in which we must take care of them. Their legacy of service, of selflessness and of sacrifice is one of our most precious national treasures.