

Secretary's Message

Wear freedom's medals. Pride in being a veteran. Pride in our veterans.

America's veterans are the face of America. They come from all walks of life, all ages, all ethnicities. They served our Nation honorably and well and we honor that service, but how do we honor the veteran – the individual who put on the uniform and gave his or her all for our country?

Last spring I had the privilege of attending the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day ceremonies in Sydney, Australia. ANZAC Day is the most important national holiday in Australia, a combination of Memorial Day and Veterans Day. It was established to commemorate the more than 8,000 Australians killed in the battle of Gallipoli in World War I, and now honors all Australian and New Zealand veterans.

One of the things that stood out during the day-long ceremonies was how all of the veterans and surviving family members wore their medals and campaign ribbons. I think this is a great way to show your pride in being a veteran, and having served one's country. It focused public pride and attention on those veterans as individuals with personal histories of service and sacrifice for the common good.

That is why I am calling on all veterans and surviving family members of those no longer with us to wear their military awards and decorations this Veterans Day, November 11, 2006. Wearing these medal and ribbons will demonstrate the deep pride our veterans have in their military service and bring Veterans Day home to all American citizens.

Veterans, wear your pride on your left side this Veterans Day! Family members, wear your pride in your departed veteran's service on your right. Let America know who you are and what you did for freedom this Veterans Day.