

Remarks delivered by  
**State Senator Michael Barrett**

Veterans Day, Nov. 11th, 2014

Thank you for inviting me to join you today.

I'd like to dedicate these brief remarks to the lives and memories of Lance Corp. Travis R. Desiato and Private First Class John D. Hart and -- both native sons of Bedford, and both dearly missed by their families and friends.

In November 2004, Travis Desiato, aged 19, died in Fallujah, Iraq, as he went room to room in a house to clear it of insurgents. In October 2003, John Hart, aged 20, died in Tiza, Iraq, when his vehicle was ambushed by militants using rocket-propelled grenades.

In honoring our neighbors who serve, and sometimes fight, and sometimes endure harm – and sometimes die -- in the military, we can't avoid thinking about the lopsided arithmetic of public service: A family living somewhere in town pays a heavy price – injury or even death to a son or a daughter, to a Mom or a Dad – while our own family pays nothing. Or maybe it's the other way around. Maybe ours is the family that pays the heavy price.

Sometimes the distance between the two camps – between the families that sacrifice and the families that don't – can seem unbridgeable. If you're unlucky enough to have been touched by physical harm to yourself or to someone you love, how can others understand what you've gone through? On the other hand, if we, or the people we love, have not been exposed to peril, how can we know the experience of the family down the street that has borne the brunt of war?

While we cannot inhabit the skin of someone who's been plunged, personally, into the chaos, or of someone who grieves, the rest of us do have intense feelings of gratitude towards them. It's crucial that we translate this gratitude into concrete acts of community – appreciation for the families at Hanscom Air Force Base, support for the patients at the Bedford VA, or help for the veterans living among us who encounter head winds and tough times in adjusting back to civilian life.

It's also important that we avoid reinforcing stereotypes that might stigmatize veterans. There is the real chance of wartime experiences leaving lasting wounds. But there are

also thousands of veterans who make it home in one piece, physically and emotionally. I've met the veterans with scars, and I've met the veterans who will never forget their time served but have moved on. So let's celebrate the positive aspects of military service, and the men and women who grew, gained knowledge, honed skills, and stand ready to begin the next phases of their lives.

On this Veterans Day, may we remember the dead, come to the aid of the injured, salute the healthy -- and give thanks all around for American courage and American resilience.

Thank you.