

NOVEMBER 11, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY HONORS VETERANSEVANSTON, IL - It is a great honor and pleasure to be home today in Evanston and to be here with Bo Price who has so ably and with such great dedication year after year organized this meaningful ceremony, and with Mayor Morton, State Representative Julie Hamos, the other dignitaries, and with all of you who have gathered in this place.

This is a day of remembrance and rededication. We pause to remember the noble service and high sacrifice of those who have worn this nation's uniform. And we rededicate ourselves, in the words of President Lincoln, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle."

To all the families and veterans her today-soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen-THANK YOU for your courage, your character, your strength and the enduring power of your example. You are patriots, one and all. And every American owes you a debt of gratitude that words cannot repay. Our thoughts and prayers are also with tomorrow's veterans-our servicemen and women serving today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As we take care of those who defend our country, we must fulfill our debt to those who have defended us in the past. As a nation, we have a sacred pact with all those who served in uniform. In return, we will always take care of you. That is our solemn pledge.

We must end the national disgrace of the crisis in veterans' health care, where hundreds of thousands of veterans are now waiting up to six months for an appointment at Veterans hospitals. Our veterans deserve better.

We must end the terrible practice of "concurrent receipt" where by disabled veterans are denied full retirement and disability benefits. This is nothing less than an unjust tax on disabled veterans-and it must end. Our veterans deserve better.

Finally, we must stand with millions of veterans who struggle every day to pay the soaring price of prescription drugs. Our veterans deserve better. Men and women who fought for our freedom and liberty abroad should not have to fight their own government at home for veterans benefits to which they are entitled and which they earned through their service.

Keeping faith with our veterans is not merely a promise we keep for the past service of previous generations. Keeping faith with our veterans also helps ensure that the call to duty is answered by future generations. As George Washington observed more than two centuries ago " The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the

veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation"

In closing, with America's sons and daughters serving in Iraq and Afghanistan or other far off places around the world, we are reminded of the hardships and heroism that forge the soul of a veteran. During the Second World War, the legendary correspondent Ernie Pyle chronicled the story of the average American Soldier. And he wrote, "In the end, they are the ones that wars can't be won without."

On this Veterans Day, let us remember the service of our veterans, the ones that war and peace can't be won without. And let us renew our national promise to fulfill our sacred obligations to our veterans and families who have sacrificed so much so that we can live free.

May God bless our men and women in uniform. May God bless our veterans and your families. And may God bless the United States of America.