

Letter To The Editor: Secretary of State White Encourages All Illinoisans To Take Moment To Honor And Thank Veterans On Veterans Day

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On this upcoming Veterans Day, I encourage all Illinoisans to take a moment to honor and thank our veterans who bravely and honorably served our country.

Originally known as Armistice Day to honor and celebrate the end of World War I, Congress expanded the federal holiday in 1954 — renaming it Veterans Day — to recognize all U.S. veterans who served honorably in the military during wartime or peacetime.

I had the privilege of serving as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and as a member of the Illinois National Guard and Reserve. This experience helped shape me into the person I am today. I remain grateful to all those with whom I served and to those who served before and after me.

The United States is the greatest country in the history of the world. We serve as a beacon of freedom and hope to many in the world living under hostile rule and deplorable conditions. Yet our freedom is not and has never been free. Those serving in the U.S. military defend our freedom both at home and abroad.

As Secretary of State, I am proud to have initiated efforts to help veterans and to honor them for their service to our nation.

In 2017, I initiated a law that makes it easier for military veterans to get jobs in the trucking industry. Public Act 100-0223 allows for an exemption from the Commercial Driver License (CDL) test requirement for qualified current or former military personnel who participated in military heavy-vehicle driving programs. Illinois was the first state in the nation to take advantage of changes to federal CDL regulations that grant state driver licensing agencies the authority to exempt veterans from the written and road skills testing, a move known as the “Even Exchange” process.

We have also implemented the policy that gives U.S. military veterans the opportunity to obtain an updated driver’s license/ID card with the word “VETERAN” displayed under the signature on the front of the card. This applies to veterans who have received an *Honorable* or *General under Honorable Conditions* discharge. The veteran’s designation helps ensure military veterans living in Illinois receive the services and benefits for which they are entitled, including healthcare, education and employment assistance.

Please take time Wednesday, Nov. 11, to thank veterans for their service. It is the least we can do to recognize our heroes with a heartfelt gesture of gratitude and appreciation.

Sincerely,

Jesse White

Illinois Secretary of State

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