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SD Department of Veterans Affairs
Secretary Zimmerman October 2017 Column

SING PROUD AND LOUD AMERICA

Being a citizen of the United States means being brave, being proud of this Country, and being confident that we will succeed. Being an American is an honor and as such it is important that we support our troops that have and are fighting for our Country.

This past week, the citizens of South Dakota had the great honor to welcome home the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Forward Support Company from their deployment to the Middle East, as well as send-off the 189th Aviation Regiment as they deploy for the Middle East.

Sometimes when words fail us, a song will fill our hearts with pride and move us forward. Powerful lyrics have inspired our lives for generations in church, in school, and in our communities.

Personally, I have found great comfort in songs like: America the Beautiful, God Bless America, the National Anthem, the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and God Bless the USA.

During my 63 years of life I have had many occasions to hear Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." As a soldier, the words come naturally and I swell with pride in knowing the land we love and stand beside are guarded by our military personnel. I know there is always a brother or sister near me that has the same cause and ideals.

Hearing Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" at deployments and demobilizations for the last ten years, especially since my own tour of duty and service, brings me to my feet in pride of service, and remembrance of all those that gave the ultimate sacrifice. As Greenwood sings, "And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free, and I won't forget the men who died who gave that right to me," I stand tall. I stand proud. I stand thankful.

It's about these men and women who put their lives on the line for us. We benefited—every one of us—from their service and sacrifice. Let's be there for them the same way they were there for us.

At a time when our country faces so many challenges, let's continue to find time to hum or sing America the Beautiful, God Bless America, the National Anthem, the Battle Hymn of the Republic, God Bless the USA and numerous other songs that highlight the legacy we have achieved. We are America. Stand proud and sing loud!

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs