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SDDVA March Column – Recognizing the Sacrifice and Contributions of Those who Served in Vietnam

March 29th marks Vietnam War Veterans Day, a day to reflect on the sacrifices and service of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War. Many of these veterans returned home to a country that was divided in its support for the war, and in some cases, they were met with hostility rather than the gratitude they deserved. This day is an opportunity not only to honor their bravery and commitment but also to offer a long-overdue welcome home.

While we can never fully understand the challenges faced by those who fought during the Vietnam War, we can come together to recognize their contributions, acknowledge their struggles, and ensure they know they are respected, valued, and finally, home. It's a moment to heal old wounds and remind them that their service matters.

Those who fought in Vietnam are part of us, part of our history. They reflected the best in us. No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice; but it is good for us that we honor them and their sacrifice.

Vietnam Veterans fought for freedom in a place where liberty was in danger. Many sacrificed their lives in the name of duty, honor, and country. All were patriots who lit the world with their fidelity and courage. They kept the faith. They fought on, sustained by one another and deaf to the voices of those who didn't comprehend. They performed with a steadfastness and valor that veterans of other wars salute, and they are forever true patriots. They are our heroes, and we must never forget them.

The South Dakota Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Pierre stands as a testament to those who sacrificed their lives, as well as to the soldiers who returned home. The memorial includes a soldier with his jungle pack slung low, his rifle and K-bar at the ready. Behind him, the wall lists the names of the fallen. This memorial serves as a reminder that these heroes are part of our shared history.

Let us never underestimate what service can mean. It lifts up others. It enriches our lives, and it makes us a part of a proud American story, part of the solemn duty that has moved so many patriots across the generations: to leave this country better than they found it.

To all our veterans: By lending your talents to the United States military, you made us stronger and smarter. By serving with courage and compassion, you set an example for

the next generation. And by giving so much, you reminded us that this democracy is worth defending.

That devotion gives life to the ironclad commitments that we make to the American people that we will always protect and defend this country.

Thank you, to all our veterans, for answering your country's call.