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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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SDDVA SECRETARY SCHNEIDER'S FEBRUARY COLUMN – STRENGTH IN BROTHERHOOD

As we step into February, the Department of Veterans Affairs reflects on what it truly means to serve and to stand by one another, today, tomorrow, and always. Our veterans forged bonds stronger than steel in the heat of duty. Now it's our turn to ensure those bonds endure through support, reconstruction, and gratitude.

Upcoming events in February:

- February 1: Four Chaplains Memorial Service – The American Legion, Post #15, Sioux Falls, 2:00 p.m. (CT)
- February 16: State Offices Closed in observance of President's Day
- February 20-22: TAL Mid-Winter Conference – Arrowwood Resort & Convention Center, Oacoma

Veterans Historical Dates:

- February 3: Four Chaplains Day is observed to remember four U.S. Army chaplains who gave their lives after the USAT Dorchester was torpedoed during World War II. Reverend George Fox, Rabbi Alexander Goode, Father John Washington, and Reverend Clark Poling comforted frightened Soldiers, organized the evacuation, and handed out life jackets, giving up their own lives so that more men could survive.
- February 19: Coast Guard Reserve 85th Birthday
- February 19: Battle of Iwo Jima Anniversary: We honor the 80th Anniversary of Iwo Jima and the Marines who faced unimaginable fire to secure that tiny island. Their courage, sacrifice, and that flag rising over Mount Suribachi still remind us of what resilience, unity, and duty above self truly look like.

Veterans share a bond forged in trials, on battlefields, and in barracks that doesn't fade when service ends. It demands care through awareness, outreach, and daily acts of support. In South Dakota, programs like What's Brewing, Fallen Hero Bridge Dedications,

and other memorials and conferences help strengthen that bond. We listen. We connect. We stand together.

To our veterans: you are never alone. You carry not just medals, but the enduring gratitude of a thankful state. You carry the solidarity of those who served beside you in uniform, and those who now walk hospital corridors or attend outreach events searching for connection as much as care.

I encourage all South Dakotans to take part in these events and reflect on what this month represents. May February remind us that unity, gratitude, and unwavering commitment lie at the heart of our mission to serve those who have served. Together, let us move forward with respect, understanding, and a renewed promise to our veterans, our heroes, and our shared future.

Jeremiah J. Schneider, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs