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For Immediate Release

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Secretary Schneider's October Column

October in South Dakota brings a familiar kind of transition. Summer's green fades into red, orange, and gold. Harvest is underway, mornings carry a sharper chill, and the prairie wind reminds us that winter is never far away. South Dakota weather gives us another reason to stay prepared: bring the jacket, even if the day begins at 75 degrees.

For veterans, change is nothing new. We have changed duty stations, adapted to new missions, and learned to adjust when plans shift.

Military service teaches us that no mission succeeds because of one person alone. Someone is always standing watch, checking equipment, preparing meals, treating the injured, maintaining the vehicle, or making sure the person beside them is not carrying the load alone, and that responsibility does not end when the uniform comes off.

This month, consider checking in on a veteran you haven't heard from in a while. Invite someone for coffee. Offer a ride to an appointment. Help a surviving spouse navigate benefits. Connect a veteran with employment, healthcare, or local resources. Sometimes the most meaningful act of service is simply saying, "I'm here. You are not alone."

October brings another regional Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication for four fallen heroes from Northeastern South Dakota. These bridge dedications matter because they ensure the names and sacrifices of South Dakota's fallen heroes remain visible. Families will cross those bridges. Children will see the names and ask who they were. Their stories will be told again. That is how we honor service. That is how we keep faith with those who gave everything.

October event schedule also includes the following highlights:

- October 2-3: DAV Fall Conference – Sioux Falls
- October 12: Indigenous Peoples Day – State Offices Closed
- October 13: Navy Birthday
- October 14: Regional Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication - Sisseton
- October 15-18: VA Resource and Enrollment Fair - Pierre
- October 26: National Day of the Deployed

Enjoy the season, support your neighbors, and take time to remember those who came before us. The mission may change, and the uniform may change, but our commitment to one another never should.

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