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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The American Legion wins long fight on behalf of Gold Star parents**

*Congress awards state veterans home privileges to all parents of fallen warriors*

WASHINGTON (Sept. 21, 2010) – After a decades-long campaign waged by The American Legion and sympathetic advocates, the U.S. Senate last night cleared legislation that will grant state veterans home care privileges to all Gold Star mothers and fathers; parents who have lost sons or daughters during military service. Heretofore, since the post-Civil War era, only parents who had sacrificed **all** of their children in service were eligible for veterans' home residency. The passage by unanimous voice vote followed overwhelming passage of similar legislation at the end of June.

"To lose one's child to the service of our country is the ultimate sacrifice a parent can make," said Tim Tetz, Director of The American Legion's Legislative Division. "We owe them much more than a debt of gratitude. It is heartening to see that Congress is now making an honorable payment on that debt."

Tetz, formerly the Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, was among those who urged Senator John Ensign (R-Nev.) to introduce enabling legislation into the Senate making that state one of the prime driving forces behind the move to open veterans' home care to more Gold Star parents. Tetz credited Ensign as being "hugely supportive" of the Senate measure. Nevada's Gary Bermeosolo, Legislative Chairman of the National Association of State Veterans Homes, also offered his thanks by saying "(we) appreciate the efforts of Senator Ensign and Congressman William "Mac" Thornberry of Texas (who introduced the House bill in late January) to correct the inequity created by the onerous definition requiring Gold Star Parents to have lost "all" of their children to wartime service in order to be considered for admission to a state veterans home. We prayed that they would be successful with their efforts."

The American Legion's effort to honor all Gold Star parents with much deserved care goes back many years. It was a special project of Paul Morin, who served as the Legion's National Commander in 2006-2007 and was superintendent of a veterans home in his native Massachusetts. "The contribution of Commander Morin and fellow American Legion movers and shakers in correcting this inequity cannot be overstated," concluded Mr. Tetz.

The House and Senate bills will now be presented to a joint conference committee for reconciliation of any differences with the final version to be forwarded President Obama for his signature.

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