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Hartselle Enquirer

Dedicated to the growth and welfare of Hartselle, Alabama
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Veterans deserve our thanks

Rep. Ronald Grantland, Guest columnist

When you think about a group of veterans, you probably imagine a group out of the Greatest Generation, elderly men, sitting around talking about storming across the hill country of France or recalling the fierce fighting on Tarawa or Iwo Jima. However, the reality of who veterans are is changing along with the modern military, and this Veterans Day is a good chance for us to recognize not only the importance of our veterans, but their diversity as well.

The fact is if you were able to get a group of Alabama veterans together, you would find a group of people that look like Alabama: men and women, rural folks and people from the cities, blacks and whites, seniors and people who were recently seniors in high school. All are veterans, and all deserve our thanks.

Throughout the 20th century Alabamians fought all over the world. From Havana to Hanoi, and Belleau Wood to Baghdad, Alabama has sent her sons and daughters off to defend our freedoms. Our state has contributed more than her fair share by enlisting more active duty reservists and National Guard troops per capita than almost all other states.

From the country boys who signed up to fight "over there" in World War I, to the Tuskegee Airmen who broke the color barrier, while never losing a bomber they escorted, to the men and women in our National Guard who served in Desert Storm, our veterans are drawn from all walks of life and all corners of our state. As we enter a new century, we still see the same spirit and dedication required for military service by our fellow Alabamians.

Anyone willing to put his or her life on the line for this country deserves our care and respect, and that is exactly what Veterans Day is for. Our veterans played an integral role in protecting our lives, preserving our liberties and enhancing our safety. This Veteran's Day, I urge you to take a moment and remember those who have given so much to this country in the name of freedom. Veterans Day is more than a day off, it is a time to reflect on the meaning of service to one's country and to appreciate the sacrifices necessary to defend this great country.

In addition to remembering those who have fought in the past, we must never forget those who are fighting today. Whether in peacetime operations or in harm's way, there are currently thousands of troops deployed around the globe and they should be in our thoughts and prayers as well.

For those wishing to help our veterans of tomorrow, those who are currently serving in the military, there are several ways you can do so. You can donate to the USO by the visiting their web site at www.uso.org.

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There are also many organizations that allow those interested to send care packages, post messages, or become a pen pal for our troops. These organizations are available online at www.americasupportsyou.mil, www.anysoldier.com, and www.supportyourtroops.us, just to name a few.

Although November is known for Thanksgiving, I ask that you not look beyond Veterans Day this year. Alabama has been blessed with a citizenry that hears the call of duty, and answers it. That's something we can all be thankful for.

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