

Obama Calls on Nation to Honor Military Families, Caregivers

By Elaine Sanchez
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1, 2011 – Calling on the nation to celebrate military families' service and sacrifice, President Barack Obama today signed proclamations designating November as Military Family Month and National Family Caregivers Month.

"With every step we take on American soil, we tread on ground made safer for us through the invaluable sacrifices of our service members and their families," the president said in his Military Family Month proclamation.

This month is devoted to celebrating military families' exceptional service, strength and sacrifice, he said. Their commitment to the nation, he added, "goes above and beyond the call of duty."

"Just as our troops embody the courage and character that make America's military the finest in the world," Obama said, "their family members embody the resilience and generosity that make our communities strong."

Families are weathering deployments and long separations while serving with heroism in their homes and neighborhoods, the president noted. Military spouses hold down home fronts, children step up to take on additional responsibilities, and parents and grandparents offer their quiet support as they wait for their loved one's safe return.

"To these families, and to those whose service members who never come home, we bear a debt that can never be fully repaid," the president said.

Obama cited the Joining Forces campaign as a way the nation can express its gratitude to troops and their families. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, launched the campaign earlier this year to call on all Americans to support and honor service members, veterans and their families. This support, he added, should continue not just while the nation is at war, but during every stage of service members' lives.

Obama said his administration is committed to improving military families' lives by enhancing learning opportunities for military children, aiding military spouses in their quest to advance their careers and education, and improving mental health counseling.

"Our service members swore an oath to protect and defend, and with each step we take on this land we cherish, we remember our steadfast promise to protect the well-being of the family members they hold dear," he said. "Every act of kindness we can offer helps cultivate a culture of support for our military families, and I encourage each American to make a difference in the lives of these patriots."

Obama called on Americans to honor military families throughout the month, whether through personal actions or public service. In that way, he said, the nation can honor these families "for the tremendous contributions they make in support of our service members and our nation."

The president also urged Americans to celebrate and honor caregivers in his National Family Caregivers Month proclamation.

"Across our country, millions of family members, neighbors, and friends provide care and support for their loved ones during times of need," Obama said. "With profound compassion and selflessness, these caregivers sustain American men, women and children at their most vulnerable moments, and through their devoted acts, they exemplify the best of the American spirit."

As Obama cited the contributions of all caregivers, he noted the importance of sustaining military caregiver support. "One of our nation's greatest responsibilities," he said, "is to ensure our veterans, their families, and their caregivers receive lasting and comprehensive support."

Obama noted that he signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act last year, which extends additional assistance to family members who care for severely wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Our military caregivers exemplify the heroism found not only on the fields of battle, but also in the hearts of those who tend to our wounded warriors when they come home," he said.

This month offers a time to honor the "tireless compassion" of all family caregivers, Obama said. "This month and throughout the year, let the quiet perseverance of our family caregivers remind us of the decency and kindness to which we can all aspire."

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