

PATRICK-MURRAY ADMINISTRATION CELEBRATES VETERANS DAY

BOSTON - Thursday, November 11, 2010 - Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray and Secretary of Veterans' Services Tom Kelley honored Massachusetts Veterans and service members past and present at the Commonwealth's official Veterans' Day ceremony today at the State House. Massachusetts continues to be a national leader in providing benefits and services offered to veterans and their families.

Inspired by requests from Massachusetts residents, Lt. Governor Murray led a two-minute moment of silence during today's ceremony to honor all veterans.

"Veterans past and present deserve recognition and respect each and every day for their bravery and service," said Lt. Governor Murray, chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services. "On this day of observance, we honor the many servicemen and women who have fought and continue to fight to protect our nation's safety and freedom."

Today's Veterans Day program included a special tribute to women veterans, led by Gail Cavanugh-McAuliffe, a U.S. Army veteran and employee of the Department of Veterans' Services. Tim Sullivan, Cdr. USN (Ret.) Former POW, and Maureen Dunn, National League of Families of POW/MIA, led a candle lighting ceremony for those who have been held prisoner or are missing. Gold Star Families were paid tribute with a rose presentation.

"Every year, the country gathers on November 11 to mark Veterans' Day," said Secretary of Veterans' Services Tom Kelley. "Today, we honor the men and women of generations past and those who are currently serving overseas in defense of our nation. To all of our Veterans, I say 'thank-you' for your service."

"Today is a day when the nation pauses in a moment of silence with solemn pride in the remembrance of the heroism of those who have served, those who are currently serving, and those who died in our country's service," said Major General Joseph C. Carter, The Adjutant General, Massachusetts National Guard. "The National Guard doesn't mark this day each year as a celebration of victory; but rather, as a celebration of those who made victory possible. It's a day we keep in our hearts and minds the brave men and women of this young nation -- generations of them -- who above all else believed in and fought for a set of ideals that makes our country strong and free."

Lt. Governor Murray also acknowledged Richard Jones, a student veteran recently elected by his peers to serve as the student representative to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Jones, a 28-year-old native of Chicopee, is a first-generation college student at Holyoke Community College who served in two tours in Afghanistan.

"I was proud to serve my country in Afghanistan but now I'm serving back on the home front - serving my fellow students," said Richard Jones. "It was awesome winning election to the Board of Higher Education. There are so many veterans coming into our colleges and universities right now. They need support and

it's a privilege to be able to help state officials think through what vets need as they move from combat to campus."

"Every year on Veterans' Day we recognize the enormous sacrifices our veterans have made to make possible all the freedoms and liberties that we have today. We need to continue to do everything we can to ensure that the people of our armed forces are as safe as possible when they are in combat, and as supported as possible when they return home," said Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly, Chair, Joint Committee on Veterans' and Federal Affairs.

"Veterans Day allows all of us to recognize our service members and veterans for what they've done and continue to do for this country," said Representative Harold P. Naughton, Jr. Chair, Joint Committee on Veterans' and Federal Affairs. "However, it is important that we continue to recognize the enormous sacrifices our soldiers make everyday for the sake of freedom, and to ensure that our veterans and service members have the support they need both in combat and upon returning home. We may never be able to repay our veterans for what they've done for us, but we can do everything in our power to make sure they receive the greatest care and services possible."

The ceremony concluded with a 21-gun salute by the Massachusetts Army National Guard followed by Taps played by the Navy Band Northeast.

Massachusetts is a national leader for veterans' services, and the Patrick-Murray Administration continues to support the Commonwealth's veterans and their families. Within the last year, Governor Patrick authorized into law expanded benefits for veterans. Among major provisions included in this law, cash bonuses available to service members who serve multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan have increased from a one-time \$1,000 "Welcome Home" bonus to an additional \$500 bonus for each additional overseas deployment, service members stationed abroad are now allowed to cast electronic ballots for elections, service-disabled veterans are now included within the existing preferences for hiring of veterans for construction and public-works contracts, and a "Medal of Liberty" has been established that will be awarded to the next of kin of any Massachusetts service member killed in action or who dies as a result of wounds received while in action.

This year, Governor Patrick also joined four other governors for a five-day trip sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense to meet with Massachusetts servicemen and women in a show of gratitude and appreciation for their courageous service. The Governor visited with troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

About the Department of Veterans' Services The Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) advocates on behalf of over 400,000 veterans in Massachusetts, their families, and survivors. DVS works to secure federal compensation and other benefits for which veterans may be eligible. The Department also administers needs-based benefits program through Veterans' Service Officers throughout Massachusetts and provides state funding to organizations offering homeless shelter, transitional housing, and outreach services to veterans.