

I thought you might be interested in my prepared remarks commemorating Veterans Day that I gave at the Chico Elks Lodge Veterans Annual Dinner. As I said in the speech, our veterans “are part of a long line of heroes, beginning at our nation’s founding, who have won and preserved our freedoms through their selflessness and courage...I would like to say to all of our veterans here today: You have helped to keep the United States of America strong and free. Your service will never be forgotten.”

*Good morning. It is great to be with you today to honor men and women so worthy of our gratitude and respect: our nation’s veterans. They are part of a long line of heroes, beginning at our nation’s founding, who won and preserved our freedoms through their selflessness and courage.*

*I am honored to represent the veterans who reside in California’s ten-county Second Congressional District. I would like to recognize those individuals who are in this room today, beginning with the brave veterans of World War II... The Korean War... the Vietnam War... the Gulf War... the missions in Bosnia and Kosovo..., the War on Terror’s missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and our active duty troops.*

*On behalf of myself, my family, and those I represent, thank you for your service and sacrifice. You have given up time with your spouses and children, you have endured physical injuries, and you have suffered emotional stress – all to serve and defend our nation.*

*We must also not forget to thank the families of our veterans and active duty troops here today for supporting your loved ones who serve us. As we approach the holidays your sacrifice becomes even more pronounced and even more deeply felt.*

*Although we can never adequately repay our veterans, we must honor their sacrifices by ensuring that they receive the highest quality benefits and health care. Here in Chico, the VA outpatient clinic has expanded both in services and personnel, and veterans across the North State have seen similar improvements.*

*In recent years, Congress has passed a new GI education benefit bill, strengthened benefits for reservists who serve in combat, and worked to ensure that battle-scarred troops have top-notch care. We also ended a senseless offset by allowing severely disabled veterans to receive both*

*their disability benefit and retirement pay.*

*I'd like to touch on three additional bills that the House passed last month on behalf of our veterans. The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act responds to the unfortunate fact that many of our veterans are unemployed. It offers these veterans the chance to learn vocational skills and equips them to reenter the civilian workforce.*

*Second, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act postpones certain obligations, such as mortgage payments, for deployed service members and their families. It also protects the surviving spouses of fallen service members from home foreclosures for 12 months, giving these spouses time to adjust to the unspeakably difficult changes in their lives.*

*Finally, the Veterans' Benefits Act creates a yearly evaluation for Veterans Benefits Administration employees and provides training for those who are poor at processing claims. I believe this change is especially important for the North State. Our veterans have been struggling to work with the Veterans' Benefits Administration's regional office in Oakland and its inability to process claims in a timely manner. These bills passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support, and I hope the Senate will also pass them quickly.*

*In closing, I would like to say to all of our veterans here today: You have helped to keep the United States of America strong and free. Your service will never be forgotten. Thank you. May God bless you and your families, and may God bless our great nation.*