



Memorial Day 2005

May 27, 2005

Dear Friend,

When I was growing up in the 1960s, my father was attached to the Department of Defense and we frequently lived near military bases. As a girl, I rarely saw women in uniform. Today, a young woman I have known since she was a toddler, Spc. Angelina Wiger, is serving her nation proudly in Iraq. She is not alone. Since the beginning of the war in March 2003, some 60,000 U.S. servicewomen have been deployed to Iraq, and nearly 22,000 are in theatre today. Almost 200 Minnesota National Guard women are proudly serving in Iraq right now.

Women in uniform are critical to our nation's national security. They are patrolling bomb-ridden highways, guarding checkpoints shouldering M-16s and entering insurgent strongholds. This service comes at great risk and sacrifice for servicemen and women. Tragically, hostile fire in Iraq has killed thirty-five U.S. servicewomen and wounded almost 300 more.

Women can no longer be segregated in gender defined roles. Both women and men have integral roles to play in every aspect of our society - even in war. Women serve in major roles in every branch of the military. In Iraq there is no front line. A guerrilla insurgency indiscriminately targets soldiers and civilian alike. In this deadly environment, women are volunteering to serve with courage, competence and commitment. I salute these brave women and I pray for their safe return home.

As we recognize Memorial Day, our thoughts and prayers are with the many families who have lost loved ones. Each and every man and woman in uniform deserves our gratitude, respect and honor.

It was in this spirit that I joined friends and family at the recent funeral of Capt. Kelly Hinz from Woodbury. This week our state faces the sad news of the loss of another son in Iraq, Chief Warrant Officer Matthew Lourey. My thoughts and prayers are with all of the families of the twenty-two men who have died in Iraq, as well as the many others who have remember loved ones they have lost. The news from Iraq and Afghanistan is a daily reminder of the high cost of war paid by Americans, Iraqis and Afghans and the families they leave behind.

Sincerely,

Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Serving Minnesota's Fourth District

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