



BRAD PFAFF

STATE SENATOR

Senator Pfaff Memorial Day Column

In today's fast-moving atmosphere, the significance of Memorial Day often gets overlooked. Initially known as Decoration Day, it originated following the Civil War and became a federal holiday in 1971.

Memorial Day is a time for reflection, remembrance, and gratitude. We set aside this day to honor the men and women who served our nation, defending freedom and democracy. Their ultimate sacrifice reminds us of the heavy price paid for the liberties we enjoy today. We must recognize and reflect on the fallen warriors while doing more for those veterans still living.

As a Wisconsin State Senator and member of the State Building Commission, I've had the honor of supporting initiatives that invest in our veterans. Whether it's approving improvements to our state's veteran cemeteries or championing a new Wisconsin Veterans Museum, I've seen firsthand the importance of preserving their legacy and ensuring that veterans receive the respect they deserve. But our work must go beyond brick and mortar.

Earlier this month, my colleagues and I in the State Senate took action to extend veteran benefits to those who served in Laos in support of the United States during the Vietnam War, a long-overdue recognition of their sacrifice. We also voted to waive special registration plate fees for Gold Star families, a small but meaningful gesture to honor those who have lost loved ones in service to our country.

These legislative efforts are important, but honoring our veterans isn't just the responsibility of elected officials. It's something each of us should fulfill. Respecting their service means ensuring that when our veterans and their families need benefits, they are available. It means advocating for high-quality healthcare, rehabilitation services, and employment opportunities. It means addressing the unacceptable reality that some veterans struggle with mental health, hunger, and homelessness.

That is a debt we owe to the men and women in uniform—not just on Memorial Day, but all year round.

Let us honor their service not only with words, but with actions. Let us ensure that their sacrifices are never forgotten and the needs of living veterans are never overlooked. And let us always remember that freedom is never free—it is earned through the courage and commitment of those willing to defend and protect it.