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**State Rep. Tom Tangretti
Remarks – Memorial Day 2006**

Slickville American Legion
Monday, May 29, 2006

Memorial Day ...

For many people it means a three-day weekend filled with barbeques and picnics and shopping.

It is a time to get away from the humdrum of work, and to look forward to the coming of summer.

But for some people, Memorial Day holds a much greater significance.

On May 5, 1868, General John Logan issued an order establishing a day of remembrance for the men who died during the Civil War, and on May 30, 1868, Memorial Day was first officially observed in the United States.

Flowers were placed on the graves of both fallen Union and Confederate soldiers.

Now, of course, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II and even the Korean war are ancient history for many of us.

The Vietnam War is fading memory.

But Operation Desert Storm in 1991, and the current Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom have once again reminded all Americans that our friends and neighbors, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, continue to give their lives in defense of our freedom and the freedom and dignity of others.

Like most people, I know many who have served in the Armed Forces...family members, friends, associates and constituents.

These men and women are a constant reminder to me of what Memorial Day is really all about.

The meaning is embodied in the oath that all of them took with they enlisted in service to their country:

That oath is:

I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR THAT I WILL SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC; THAT I WILL BEAR TRUE FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE TO THE SAME; AND THAT I WILL OBEY THE ORDERS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE ORDERS OF THE OFFICERS APPOINTED OVER ME, ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS AND THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE. SO HELP ME GOD.

This oath, taken by each and every soldier, communicates why they do what they do, and why it is so important to all of us.

Soldiers are defenders of the principles that make this nation great.

They are the patriots that protect our ideals, our Constitution and our way of life.

They are the embodiment of the courage, sacrifice and individual liberty that we represent to the rest of the world.

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They are true to themselves, and to the people of this nation that they serve on behalf of.

Right now, we are seeing many of our fellow citizens return from this service.

Sadly, there are some families who will not see their service members return.

As we look in the eyes of these returning soldiers, and the families of those who will not be coming home, the words of the oath that they take should ring in all of our consciences.

Talk to a veteran today, and thank them for taking that oath; tell them it means something to you, and that their sacrifice and their service mean something to you...something you will remember and respect not just at Memorial Day and Veterans Day, but throughout the year and whenever you see a veteran, or the grave of a soldier who did not come home.

I would like to leave all of you with one thought before we leave here.

I'm sure that all of us have things on our schedule today – shopping, a picnic, a day trip, a family gathering.

But there is one thing all of us should have on today's agenda that sadly, I fear many do not.

So if you don't already have plans to do so today, visit your local cemetery.

In your own, quiet way, say thank you to the men and women buried there who served this nation, and who died in that service.

Remember that they gave their lives so that we could continue to live in the freedom spelled out in the Constitution.

Without their defense and protection, the Constitution would be just another piece of paper – an interesting idea -- and America would be just another country in a long list that have come and gone.

Our Constitution is a beacon to the world, and our nation is still here today as the embodiment of that



Constitution, because of the men and women who have defended it in our Armed Services.

Please take a moment, especially today, to remember particularly those who died in that defense – in your defense.

...Lest we forget.

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