

Mankato, MN- Today, Congressman Walz, a 24 year Veteran of the Army National Guard, announced he is leading a bipartisan effort to encourage Members of Congress to invite an Iraq War Veteran or family member who lost a loved one to the State of the Union address.

“With the war in Iraq officially over, it is important that Congress, and all Americans, never forget the sacrifices made by our brave men and women of the Armed Forces,” said Walz. “It is a longstanding tradition to invite national and local figures who have made a positive impact on our country. I can think of no one who has made more of a positive impact on our country than our troops.”

Walz continued, “Moving forward, we must redouble our efforts to ensure our veterans have access to the healthcare they deserve and are provided with ample opportunities for education and good-paying jobs to support their families.”

Congressman Walz also announced he has invited Mike McLaughlin, an Iraq War Veteran and Mankato resident, to attend the State of the Union address with him. After returning home from Iraq, McLaughlin pursued a degree at Minnesota State University, Mankato. While there, McLaughlin and several other veterans were approached by Congressman Walz to work together towards creating a new GI Bill for returning veterans. McLaughlin graduated and works for Unimin Corp. in Kasota, MN.

“With the wars overseas winding down and a lot of troops coming home, there needs to be a continued focus that the treatment and care they have earned is not put on the back burner,” said McLaughlin. “Having served in the Army National Guard, Congressman Walz understands the importance of providing for our veterans and I am honored to attend the State of the Union with such a strong veterans advocate.”

Joining Rep. Walz in leading the effort is Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH), and Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL).

Walz enlisted in the Army National Guard at 17, and retired 24 years later as Command Sergeant Major. Walz is the highest ranking enlisted soldier ever to serve in Congress. Walz

serves on the U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

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