

Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 24, 2004

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VA, Women Legislators and DAV to Preserve History

San Antonio, Texas - A news conference will be held at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 24, 2004, at Estela's Mexican Restaurant to announce a renewed effort to record the stories and personal experiences of wartime veterans as part of the Veterans History Project.

The Project documents first-hand accounts of the military men and women who fought for freedom in our nation's wars, as well as the contributions of civilian volunteers and war industry workers who supported them.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is joining forces with the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL), the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the Library of Congress to increase awareness of the Veterans History Project.

Women legislators from every state and territory in the nation will serve as Team Leaders in NFWL's "Heart to Heart" initiative to record interviews with veterans for inclusion in the Library of Congress' Archives.

Senator Leticia Van de Putte serves as the team leader for Texas. "The importance of this project cannot be overstated," she said. "These veterans are the sole custodians of a very important part of American history. Sharing their stories will help us preserve them as a permanent source of valuable historical information."

DAV is encouraging their members to be interviewed for the project as well, to help capture and preserve veterans' own accounts of their combat experiences. Civilians who supported the war effort in various capacities are also encouraged to contribute their recollections.

Recognizing that the typical World War II veteran is more than 80 years old, there is a heightened sense of urgency to gather their stories so that their unique experiences can be shared with generations to come. The oral histories can be recorded on audio or videotape, or submitted on paper. Original diaries, letters, maps, movies and photographs are also welcomed.

NFWL Team Leaders have already started interviewing World War II veterans, and will now expand their focus to include veterans from Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars and other conflicts. Once collected, these interviews will be presented to the Library of Congress.

Congress passed legislation creating the Veterans History Project, which was signed into law by the President on October 27, 2000 (PL 106-380). The America Folklife Center at the Library of Congress serves as the project coordinator and custodian.

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