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GOP Legislators Blocking Help for MT Guard Families Dem Chief Blasts Sinrud, Lange

Provisions Would Help Montana National Guard Families, Veterans, Military Personnel

HELENA, MT – Montana Democratic Party Chairman Dennis McDonald, a rancher from Melville, Montana, issued the following statement today after the Republican-controlled Montana House of Representatives voted to oppose Governor Schweitzer’s Military Family Square Deal, a provision to create a military family relief fund in Montana to help families while a loved one is called to active duty overseas.

“Our friends and neighbors, brave Montanans, are risking their lives for us in Iraq and Afghanistan every day. We owe it to them to do everything in our power to ensure that their families are taken care of while they are serving our country.

“This is the least the legislature should do. It would cost very little—less than one-half of one percent of our estimated budget surplus, but it would make a big difference in the lives of families who are struggling to balance the demands of work and home life while a parent or other loved one is deployed. Over one-half of American states have implemented similar programs to assist National Guard families with the challenges of more frequent and longer military service.

“Supporting the troops means more than just wearing a red, white, and blue necktie. Republican leaders claim they support the troops while they vote against scholarships for National Guard members, block passage of the military family relief fund to help the families of our Guard. Instead, they fight ferociously for tax giveaways to the wealthiest out-of-state corporations and landowners like Exxon and BNSF. This latest refusal to support military families is totally outrageous. With our military families stretched so thin, efforts to support them shouldn’t even be under debate. Republican leaders should drop their opposition to this provision and do the right thing for military families.”

For over two months, the House Appropriations Committee has had the opportunity to move forward with HB 179, Governor Schweitzer’s Military Family Square Deal. Instead, they did nothing. The bill failed on a party line vote on the House floor 50-49. House Republicans have shown a consistent pattern of turning their backs on those who protect our freedom. They have blocked passage of the following measures this session:

- [HB 142](#) sponsored by Rep. Hal Jacobson, which would authorize active duty call out for disaster preparedness training
- [HB 179](#) sponsored by Rep. Julie French, which would create Montana military family relief fund
- [HB 288](#) sponsored by Rep. Brady Wiseman, which would allow for depleted uranium testing for certain veterans
- [HB 294](#) sponsored by Rep. Sue Dickenson, which would fund soldier appreciation scholarships
- [HB 660](#) sponsored by Rep. Jill Cohenour, which would help protect property of military personnel

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