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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

MARCH 29, 2023

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**Governor Pillen Honors Vietnam War Veterans at State Capitol Ceremony**

**LINCOLN, NE –**Today, Governor Jim Pillen, alongside Nebraska Department of Veterans’ Affairs (NDVA) Director John Hilgert and Nebraska National Guard Adjutant General Major General Daryl Bohac, honored Vietnam veterans in a ceremony at the Nebraska State Capitol.

“Meeting with Nebraska veterans to thank them for their service is so important,” said Governor Pillen. “They answered the call, and because of their sacrifices we can enjoy all the freedoms and opportunities that come from being an American and a Nebraskan.

It was an absolute honor to be a part of today’s ceremony and spend time with some of our state’s Vietnam veterans and their families. I encourage every Nebraskan to take a moment today to thank the Vietnam veterans in your life.”

Around 150 Nebraskans, nearly 100 of whom were Vietnam era veterans, attended the ceremony which included the presentation of lapel pins to Vietnam veterans as well as surviving spouses of deceased Vietnam veterans. Lapel pins and materials were provided as part of the U.S. Vietnam War Commemoration, a national initiative designed for federal, state, and local communities, veterans' organizations, and other nongovernmental organizations to assist in thanking and honoring our nation’s Vietnam veterans and their families. NDVA is an official commemorative partner.

“I want to extend a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to all of our state’s Vietnam veterans, many of whom did not receive the welcome home they deserved when they returned,” said NDVA Director Hilgert. “Our agency is here to recognize and honor your service as well connect you with the benefits you’ve earned. With the recent PACT Act changes, I encourage our state’s Vietnam veterans or surviving spouses to contact your county veteran service officer or our state service office at 402-420-4021 to see if we can connect you with new or expanded benefits.”

In addition to the presentation of Vietnam War lapel pins, Governor Pillen signed a proclamation recognizing March 29th as Vietnam War Veterans Day in the state of Nebraska. In 2017, March 29th was chosen to be observed in perpetuity as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The date was selected because March 29, 1973, was the day United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disestablished and the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. In addition, on and around this same day Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war.

“It remains important that we recognize the sacrifices and the burdens our Vietnam era veterans bear,” said Major General Bohac. “For those of us who followed them in the armed forces, we owe a debt of gratitude for reminding our nation, our state, and fellow citizens of what they gave up. Today, we can’t appear in public in uniform without someone thanking us for our service, thanks which we must never take for granted. That is largely due to our comrades from the Vietnam era who ultimately led our nation in coming to terms with how they were treated when coming home.”

Nebraska is currently home to around 35,000 Vietnam Era veterans according to data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

NDVA’s mission is to honor Nebraska veterans and their families by providing excellent service, assistance, and care. This includes providing veterans services to help veterans identify and access federal and state benefits including disability compensation, pension, and healthcare available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as the Nebraska Veterans Aid fund, tuition waivers, and other state services. To learn more about NDVA’s veteran services or Nebraska state benefits, please visit [veterans.nebraska.gov](https://veterans.nebraska.gov).

More information on the U.S. Vietnam War Commemoration and NDVA’s efforts to recognize Vietnam veterans can be found at [veterans.nebraska.gov/vietnam](https://veterans.nebraska.gov/vietnam).

Pictures of the event are below.

A group of people sitting in a room

Description automatically generatedA picture containing person, indoor

Description automatically generatedA person speaking into a microphone

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceA picture containing person, person

Description automatically generatedA picture containing person, person, music

Description automatically generatedA picture containing person

Description automatically generatedA group of men in a room

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