



STATE SENATOR

# Margaret O'Brien

## 2016 MEMORIAL DAY

# *A Grateful Nation Remembers*

### Senate Hearings on GR Home for Veterans

The Senate held hearings on the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans after a state audit revealed mismanagement and neglect at the home.

I am deeply troubled by the findings in the report. Fixing the problems and demanding accountability must be a top priority. The Senate Committee of Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security is considering the establishment of an independent ombudsman for our Veterans' Homes. As Chair of the committee, I fully support the bill—Senate Bill 809. Our veterans deserve the best possible care and treatment.

### New Plate Recognizes Veterans

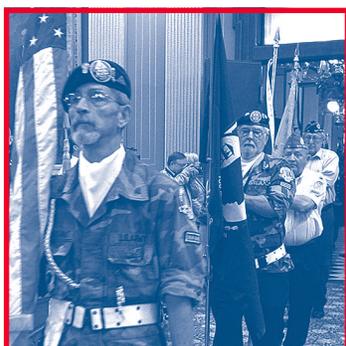
The **Support Michigan Veterans** specialty fundraising license plate is now available.

Revenue from sales of the plate will be distributed by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency to support outreach activities that benefit Michigan veterans and their families, including tuition support for Michigan National Guard members or children of the veterans' tuition grant program, and funding for county and local veterans' organizations. Find more information at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos) and click on *Owning a Vehicle* on the left sidebar.



### Michigan Senate Remembers

Each year, a special Senate Memorial Day service pays tribute to our fallen soldiers. This solemn tradition is an important way to honor their service and ensure their sacrifice is never taken for granted or forgotten. The May 26, 2016 ceremony marks the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of this special event.



### O'Brien Service Animal Legislation Now Law

Last year, several of my colleagues and I introduced legislation for voluntary registration of Service Animals. Previously, many veterans with “invisible wounds” like Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) were being denied entrance to businesses. With this new law, all persons who use Service Animals can voluntarily register their animal and receive a State of Michigan patch.

Senate Bill 299, now Public Act 145 of 2015, was part of a bipartisan package with the House and Senate to make Michigan a more veteran-friendly state. To learn how to apply, visit [www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138-74964---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138-74964---,00.html).

### State Parks Offer Fireworks-Free Fourth of July

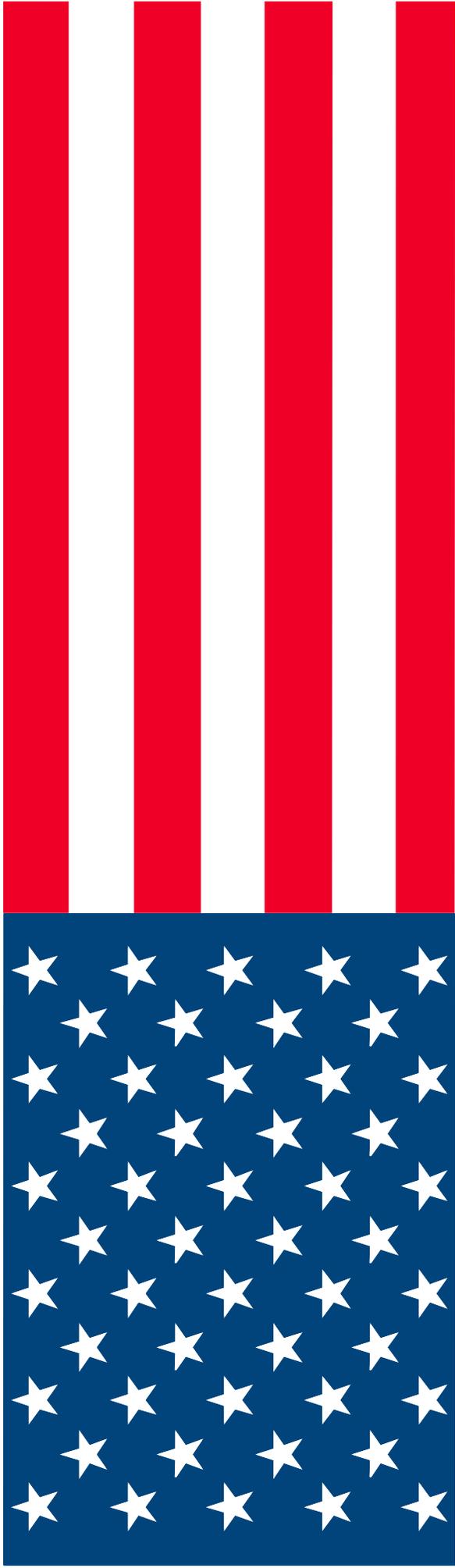
For the second year in a row, the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and the DNR are working together to offer camping options for veterans and other visitors who prefer a quieter Independence Day holiday.

Over the July 2-4 weekend, 11 Michigan state parks will host a Fireworks-Free Fourth of July. Located farther away from traditional community firework displays, these parks are ideal camping locations for those wanting a quieter celebration. Find out more, including a list of participating state parks and how to make camping reservations at [www.michigan.gov/stateparks](http://www.michigan.gov/stateparks).

### Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center

The Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center connects veterans to federal benefits, state programs and local services through a toll-free phone number — 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).

The center is the first statewide program in the nation to offer round-the-clock assistance to veterans and their families by partnering with Michigan 2-1-1, Veterans Community Action Teams and accredited benefits counselors. Veterans who call 800-MICH-VET have access to benefits and services and the chance to discuss their questions with call center agents who are veterans themselves or related to a veteran.



A GRATEFUL NATION REMEMBERS