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Gov. Heineman Presents Nebraska's First Gold Star Family License Plates

(Lincoln, Neb.) Gov. Dave Heineman today presented the first of Nebraska's Gold Star Family license plates to two families. LB 274, creating the Gold Star Family plate, was sponsored Sen. LeRoy Loudon of Ellsworth and passed in 2007.

"The Gold Star plate is an outstanding tribute to the heroes that have served our country," Gov. Heineman said. "It also supports the Nebraska State Veterans Cemetery System that will serve as the final resting place for some of our Nebraska veterans. I am honored to present the first Gold Star plates to families whose loved ones helped defend our nation and who were instrumental in the creation of Nebraska's Gold Star license plate."

Two styles of plates are available. Plates that are numbered consecutively have a \$5 annual fee. Those with a personalized message are available for an annual fee of \$40. Fees from Gold Star Family plates will be used to operate the Nebraska Veteran Cemetery System. The first state veterans' cemetery is scheduled to be completed later this year in Alliance.

The first numerical Gold Star plate was issued to Bob and Chris Wolf of Scottsbluff. Their son, Spc. James Wolf, was an engineer based in Fort Carson, Colo. He was killed in 2003 while serving in Iraq with the 52nd Engineer Battalion attached to the Army's 43rd Area Support Group.

Jim and Pat Mracek of Hay Springs, received the first personalized Gold Star Family plates.

Their son, Cory Mracek, was killed in 2004 in Iraq. He was a sergeant with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

Sen. Louden said, "I am proud to be a part of getting the legislation introduced and passed that created the Gold Star Family plate on behalf of the families of the servicemen and women who made such a sacrifice."

Anyone demonstrating lineage to a veteran who died while in good standing during active military service with the United States is eligible to apply for Nebraska's Gold Star plates. It includes current and former military personnel serving in the six branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves and National Guard.

State statute includes a broad range of potential family and descendants such as a surviving spouse; parents, stepparents and other relatives; siblings; children and stepchildren and other descendants of a service member; and foster parents or those acting as legal guardians.

Designs for Gold Star plates vary by state. Nebraska's plate was designed by the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs with consultation from the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

It was modeled on the blue star service banners commonly displayed by families and community groups dating back to World War I with loved ones serving in the armed forces. Banners include a red rectangle on a white background surrounding a blue star for every family member serving in the military. Gold stars were sewn over blue stars to remember family members killed in the line of duty. Nebraska's license plates feature a red border, a gold star with a blue outline and the phrases "Fallen Hero" and "Gold Star Family."

Gold Star Family plates are among the specialty license plates available in Nebraska. To apply for a Gold Star plate or find more information, visit the DMV website at www.dmv.ne.gov.

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Editor's Note: Photos from the news conference will be available on the Governor's website later today: www.governor.nebraska.gov