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GOVERNOR DAVE HEINEMAN
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Nebraska's Gold Star Families
By Governor Dave Heineman
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Dear Fellow Nebraskans:

Recently I had the honor of presenting the first Gold Star Family license plates to two families that lost sons while serving in Iraq. These Gold Star parents were instrumental in creating a license plate to remember Nebraska's fallen heroes.

The first Gold Star plates were issued to families who turned their personal tragedy into a gift and a meaningful way for other families across our state to remember their loved ones. They were the first to apply for these new specialty license plates when they became available this month.

It was a privilege to meet them and to say thank you for the sacrifices their sons made to defend our country. As Gold Star families, they have made a tremendous sacrifice.

Each state's Gold Star license plate has a different design. Nebraska's plate was modeled on the blue star service banners first displayed during World War I. Families hung a small banner in their windows featuring a blue star for every family member serving in the military. Smaller gold stars were sewn on top of the blue stars to remember those killed in the line of duty. Nebraska's plate features a gold star with a blue outline and the phrases "Fallen Hero" and "Gold Star Family."

Two styles of plates are available. Consecutively numbered plates have a \$5 annual fee and those carrying a personalized message are available for a \$40 annual fee. Fees from both styles of Gold Star Family plates go to help maintain the state veterans' cemetery in Alliance, which is scheduled to be dedicated later this year.

Those eligible for Nebraska's Gold Star plates include individuals who can demonstrate a family connection to a veteran who died while in good standing during active service with the United States military. It includes current and former military personnel serving in the six branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves and National Guard.

A wide range of potential family and descendants are eligible to apply for the Gold Star plate including spouses, parents and stepparents. Relatives of service members are also included such as siblings, children and stepchildren, and anyone who is a descendent of someone who served in uniform and died during active duty.

Gold Star Family plates are one of the few specialty license plates currently available in Nebraska. Application information and images of these and other license plates are available on the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles website, www.dmv.ne.gov.

Service in the armed forces requires a special resolve and commitment. Gold Star plates are a small but important reminder of the people whose service to our nation has preserved the freedoms we enjoy today. They are one way we can honor the memory of the heroes we have lost, and ensure their sacrifices will never be forgotten.