

To the editor:

Calvin Coolidge once said, “The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten.”

As a retired Army general who has served alongside extraordinary men and women in Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm, and other arenas, I share the concern of many Americans that our wounded soldiers and veterans do not receive the care they deserve from our federal and state agencies or from some non-profit providers. Recent negative press has highlighted allegations of high administrative and overhead costs in some non-profit groups. This diminishes the services and programs available to veterans and their families—draining funds that could be used to heal or comfort or restore.

We should ask ourselves two questions: “How do we best serve those individuals who have given so much and asked so little in return?” –and “How do we assure donors that their contributions will target those most in need and have the greatest impact?”

Non-profit service providers often fill a void that the state or federal government cannot—or will not—fill. That’s good, but only if the non-profits fulfill their mission and stay true to donor intent. Because of its reputation for transparency and good management, The McCormick Tribune Foundation has been asked by donor groups, including investment firms, Major League Baseball Charities, and the Ad Council, to partner with them in establishing special funds to assist wounded soldiers, veterans, and their families. We are proud to be a part of this important effort.

Twice wounded in Vietnam, I am very much aware that healing is the first step toward recovery. We call our program with the investment firms and the financial community “Operation Healing Freedom”—a name that signifies caring and commitment. I have been deeply moved by the compassion and generosity of so many Americans in so many walks of life. Protecting and honoring the intent of our donors, our veterans and our community will be a primary objective, as it should be with all non-profits.

Over 30,000 American soldiers have been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan so far. These soldiers—and others wounded in past conflicts—deserve our best. I urge all Americans to provide our soldiers and veterans with legitimate assistance through organizations committed to sound management, transparency, and limited administrative costs.

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