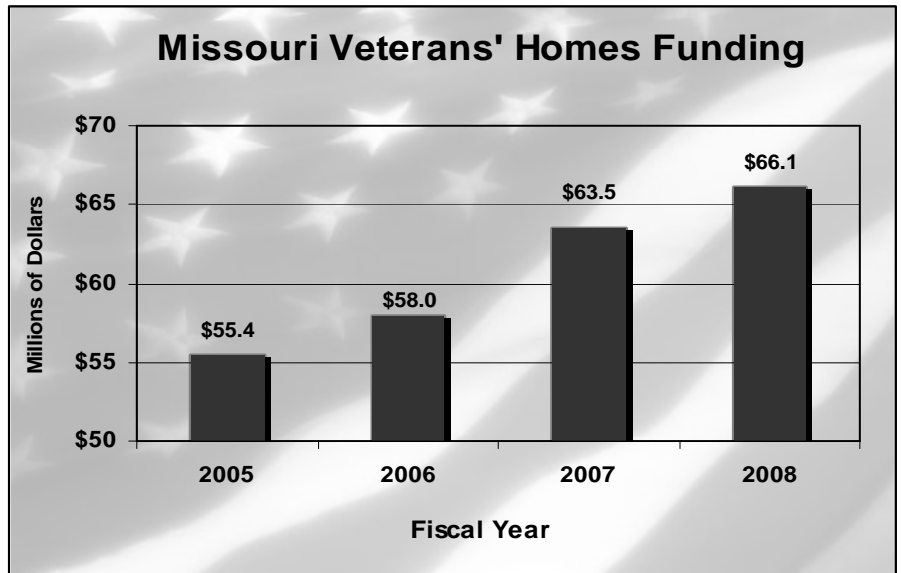


# 2007 / Fiscal Year 2008 Priorities

## Increased Funding for Veterans' Services

To improve and sustain the quality of care and resources available to Missouri veterans, Governor Blunt recommends:

- \$5 million to maintain the quality of services provided to veterans residing in Missouri's veterans' homes.
- \$1.2 million for increased medical costs at veterans' homes.
- \$4.5 million for equipment upgrades in veterans homes throughout the state.
- \$543,721 to add Vietnam War veterans to those recognized by the state for their service to our country.



### 2007 Legislative Priority

## Military Service License Extensions

Currently, the Division of Professional Registration does not have the authority to grant license renewal extensions to all of the professions licensed by the state. Without extension authority, veterans returning from service to our country face unnecessary delays in returning to work. To help Missouri veterans reestablish themselves in the workforce as quickly and easily as possible, Governor Blunt proposes legislation that expands the license renewal extensions for professionals completing military service to include the approximately 8,500 Missouri licensed professionals not currently granted an extension in statute if they are performing military service.

### 2007 Legislative Priority

## CDL Skills Test Exemption for Qualified Military Members

Current law does not allow veterans to be given credit for the high military driving standards they have achieved. These standards usually meet or exceed state standards. To help Missouri veterans obtain high quality jobs by using their military skills at home, Governor Blunt proposes legislation that gives the Department of Revenue the authority to waive a driving skills test for any qualified military applicant, for a commercial driver license (CDL), who is currently licensed at the time of application for a CDL and meets certain other requirements.

# Caring for Missouri's Veterans

*“We need to honor the men and women of our armed forces and the veterans who served our country in uniform.”*

*- Matt Blunt*

## 2006 Successes

### Providing for Missouri's Veterans' Homes

Governor Blunt is proud of the quality of care that is offered in Missouri's seven veterans' homes. In Fiscal Year 2007 he secured additional funding to continue providing high quality care; a \$202,369 increase to expand capacity, and a \$1.5 million increase for pharmaceutical costs at Missouri veterans' homes. Governor Blunt also secured pay increases for state employees in difficult-to-retain positions, which includes nurses in Missouri's veterans' homes. In Fiscal Year 2007, the budget Governor Blunt signed included pay increases of approximately 12 percent for nurses.



UPI Photo/Bill Greenblatt

Governor Blunt also increased the services available to help veterans access benefits to which they are entitled by securing \$264,697 for seven new Veterans' Service Officer staff in Fiscal Year 2007.

## **The Guard at Home Program**

In 2006, Governor Blunt signed House Bill 1787, which established the Guard at Home Program. The program will help the families of deployed guard members and reservists who are the household's primary income earners avoid economic hardship while that person is gone. The Guard at Home Program will also assist returning members of our military in



establishing or re-establishing themselves in the civilian workforce.

The program also offers a wide range of benefits to military families, including help with child care, vocational training, job placement, and transportation. It offers a hand-up to families as they face drastic changes in their lives, and perhaps in their incomes, due to service to our country.

## **The Specialist Edward Lee Myers Law**

In March 2006, Governor Blunt signed legislation that allowed families of military members to mourn their loved ones in peace. The law, entitled the "Specialist Edward Lee Myers' Law," protects other families from the situation that Specialist Myers' family endured when they were targeted, by a misguided group, for a protest during Specialist Myers' funeral. The new law Governor Blunt signed in March 2006 prohibited protesting before, during, and after a funeral. Governor Blunt signed clarifying legislation in July 2006, adding that a protestor must be at least 300 feet from the site of the funeral; this legislation will only become law if the first law is struck down by the courts.

This legislation sends a strong message that the General Assembly and the Governor wish to protect, support, and honor military members and their families, allowing them the respectful funeral that they deserve to honor their loved one.