BOSTON --Monday, November 11, 2013 – Governor Deval Patrick, Health and Human Services Secretary John Polanowicz and Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) Secretary Coleman Nee gathered today at the State House to honor past and present services members in Massachusetts.

“Today we express our gratitude, pride and support for the Massachusetts military personnel who protect our interests around the world,” said Governor Patrick. “This Veterans Day we acknowledge all veterans’ dedication and service, as we reinforce our commitment to making opportunities and resources available to the Massachusetts men and women who have served, and continue to serve us.”

Massachusetts leads the nation in providing benefits and services to the 385,000 veterans and their families that reside in the Commonwealth. Through Chapter 115 financial assistance, the Commonwealth provides over $60 million annually to assist veterans and eligible dependents with food, shelter, supplies and medical care. The Commonwealth also provides an additional $21 million in annuity payments for disabled veterans and Gold Star Families.

“The Patrick Administration has advanced innovative programs that support veterans
and their families to fully participate in the Commonwealth’s growth and opportunity,” said HHS Secretary Polanowicz. “As a veteran, a resident of the Commonwealth and a member of the Administration, I thank the men and women who have chosen to serve and will continue to create meaningful partnerships to ensure their success when they return home.”

“On Veterans Day, we come together collectively to honor the brave men and women who have served in our armed forces” said DVS Secretary Nee. “We honor the men and women of generations past and those who are currently serving overseas helping our nation stay safe. To all of our veterans, we say thank you for your service.”

Massachusetts is also leading the way in providing some of the most unique and innovative programming to deliver veterans’ services. DVS currently operates two peer outreach teams, SAVE and SHARP, which provide peer support and navigation to veterans in the areas of crisis intervention and homeless prevention. Massachusetts also has the first in the nation plan to end veterans’ homelessness by 2015.

**Special guests invited to attend ceremony:**

The Administration welcomed French Consul General Fabien Fieschi as he presented the French Legion of Honor Medal, given to American servicemen that fought in France, to two World War II veterans.

The State House ceremony also included a special tribute to women veterans, led by MAJ Sue Lynch, who has been an officer in the Army Reserves for over 24 years serving as a Judge Advocate General (JAG). MAJ Lynch is a member of the Women Veterans Network and Founder of There and Back Again, a Charlestown based non-profit. Tim Sullivan, Commander in the United States Navy (Ret.), a former POW, led a candle lighting ceremony for those who have been held prisoner or are missing. Gold Star Families were paid tribute with a rose presentation.

*About the Department of Veterans’ Services:*  
The Department of Veterans’ Services advocates on behalf of the Commonwealth’s nearly 500,000 veterans, family members, and survivors. DVS works to secure federal compensation and other benefits for which veterans may be eligible. The Department also administers needs-based benefits program through Veterans’ Service Officers throughout Massachusetts and provides state funding to organizations offering homeless shelter, transitional housing, and outreach services to veterans.

For more information go to: [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans).

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