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KSCO 1080 AM radio, Thursday, January 4, 2007, 8:00 a.m.

The following is a KSCO commentary. Here is Kay Zwerling:
Our Congress has been very remiss in their treatment of our military. I refer to the amount of pay our troops receive, and the amount received by their families. The words are pathetic, or miserly, or outrageous, or obscene. Take your pick. Military families have to struggle constantly to make ends meet, and that is unforgivable.
Conversely, the same lawmakers take very good care of themselves. Let me tell you about it:
As of 2007, rank and file Congressional lawmakers will earn $165,200 per year, while the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi will receive $212,100 per year, and the Majority and Minority leaders of both the House and Senate each will receive $183,500 per year.
Added to that, each member of Congress may wind up with as much as 80% of their final salary, that is, their own special member retirement annuity. Pretty nice - right? Many Congress people come into office with modest savings, and leave as millionaires.
I thought they were put into office to make fair laws for all of us. Who gave them permission to make separate laws to benefit only themselves?
Now, how about the salaries of those who join the military willingly without the draft to fight for all of us and our freedoms? Willing to die or maybe be physically handicapped for life, and what do our lawmakers give them? Basic salary for newly enlisted soldiers in the Army as of 2006, their monthly pay has been $1,459 per month, or yearly less than $18,000 per year, plus a small addition of $250 per month for family separation, and double salary of about $36,000 per year if in combat. There are other little categories for small amounts of money for the military.
Quite a discrepancy between lawmakers' wages and benefits, and military wages and benefits. I submit there should be a level playing field between the military and the Congress.
The military should receive as much or more than our lawmakers, and military families should not have to struggle financially for anything, and if it is not already the case, children of troops should be given free university education.
If we all separately demand of our lawmakers to give the military at least what they give themselves, maybe it will happen. It is not enough for Congress to say we support the troops. It is time for them to really support the troops with the same living wages they take for themselves. Of course, that won't happen.
For KSCO and KOMY, this is Kay Zwerling.
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