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LARSON; NATIONAL GUARD ANNOUNCE TALLY OF LETTERS, E-MAILS AND DONATIONS FOR 'OPERATION ENDURING GRATITUDE'

HARTFORD- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) and the Connecticut National Guard today announced the tally of letters and e-mails written to troops as part of ♦Operation Enduring Gratitude,♦ which officially ran from September 11, the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks, to November 11, Veteran's Day. Larson also announced the amount of funding that was raised in partnership with the Connecticut Credit Union Association and the Metro Hartford Regional Economic Alliance.

More than 5,000 letters and e-mails were received by the Connecticut National Guard and are being distributed to its soldiers and airmen, ensuring that every member of the Guard will receive a letter or e-mail of support from a state resident. Additionally, more than \$5,000 was raised to purchase phone calling-cards for members of the armed services to call home. Jeremy Mahoney, a Burlington Boy Scout with Troop 23 who attends Saint Paul's School in Bristol, raised about \$1,000 to purchase phone cards. All troops serving throughout the world can receive e-mail through ♦Operation Dear Abby♦ (Anyservicemember.navy.mil) which allows people to send e-mails of support to service members in any branch of the military.

Larson stated: ♦I am thrilled with the number of letters and e-mails that were written by Connecticut residents for our brave service men and women as part of Operation Enduring Gratitude. This initiative to encourage citizens to write service members began this year, and we here in Connecticut have set the standard for other states and districts that will participate. Many members of our armed forces are serving away from home and do not receive communications from family or friends, and this initiative is a great way to make sure they know that Americans are extraordinarily grateful for their continued service and sacrifice.♦

Major John Whitford of the Connecticut National Guard stated: ♦The Connecticut National Guard is very pleased to see the effort by schools and organizations that showed a sincere gratitude for all uniformed services. It was a great success and our soldiers and airmen were

overwhelmed by the response and greatly appreciate what those schools and organizations have done.◆

The initiative is based on a non-partisan Resolution introduced in the House of Representatives (House Concurrent Resolution 450) by Larson, a member of the Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Bob Stump (R-AZ), Chairman of the Committee; Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), the Ranking Member of the committee, and Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), who is also a member of the committee. The effort is called ◆Operation Enduring Gratitude◆ based on the name of the U.S. operation in Afghanistan, ◆Operation Enduring Freedom.◆

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