

**Statement of
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Before the
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
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Good afternoon, I would like to thank Gary LaGrange for asking me to be here today. One of my life long dreams was the opportunity to come to Washington D.C. for business and speak to members of our government. I come here today with a humble heart.

I think we can and will, through the S.A.V.E farm, help restore the American dream for many soldiers and veterans. Many soldiers have paid the price for the freedom, they have done this both directly and indirectly, carrying scars that interfere with their family lives and being productive in civilian life. I thought for a long time of how I could put into words how many of the soldiers feel after being exposed to war or stationed away from their families and could not come up with the right words. If you have lost a child you would know that loss if you have not you just don't know the loss, it stays with you every day and every minute until you learn to except and understand the loss. If you have never been in war you would not be able to feel the emotions of these soldiers.

As you know many soldiers come back from deployments seeing the world in a different way. Many have deep depressions that keep them from entering back into society and fitting well and adjusted. We can see that many take their lives because of adjustment issues. I believe we can restore the basic thoughts and goals of the American Dream. Freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity, success and to achieve through hard work in a society with few barriers.

Many soldiers do not make the change from being a soldier to being a civilian very well; many have struggles because they have been in positions of leadership, being in charge of many operational needs of the military that do not directly transfer to civilian jobs and life style.

It has been proven that working with livestock is like having a service dog as a companion. People taking the courses at the S.A.V.E. farm will be able to learn a new way of life that uses all the things they have been taught about scheduling, planning, managing and being in charge of their lives.

I was asked here today to explain how this program helped me during my time in the wounded warrior unit at Ft Riley, Kansas, during the years of 2014-2015.

I was sent to Ft Riley with several medical issues from my four deployments with the US Army. I injured my neck and could not lift my arms above my shoulders, lung issues and was suffering from P.T.S.D., the stresses of war. I had to have surgery and was deemed unfit for continued duty with the Army. Many of the thoughts I had was what I am going to do now, what is it going to be like without the military in my life. I meet Gary LaGrange a few weeks after I arrived at Ft

Riley. Gary had a class to learn and work with Honey Bees, and I thought to myself, I will try it, and found that the class helped me to think about something positive and learn something new. During this time Gary started talking with me about how he wants to set up a farm for soldiers to learn farming. The more I thought about it the more I thought it was a program that would rebuild healthy lives for people.

After thinking about his program for several weeks, the light went off in my head, and I could not think of a better thing for soldiers to do that would keep them in charge of their lives and operate a business that is a way of life. I started thinking about what classes he should have, what types of machinery, livestock and how the overall operation would work. The thoughts gave me a new outlook on the rest of my life and how I could use what I have learned to help others.

I spent 32 years 10 months and 16 days of my life serving my country and was forced to retire. For those years I put the military at the top of my list and I hate to say before everything always wanting to defend my country and our way of life.

Yes I worked hard during my life and own a farm in Minnesota, and now I am using my knowledge to help others leaving the military to live a healthy productive life.

I am looking forward to being the first farm manager.

After all farmers feed the world and it takes people that can do it all to be good farmers? If we don't help these people become farmers, who will feed the world in a few short years?

I believe this is a good thing to do and we must find a way to get it done.

I would like to close with a quote from John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "God's work must surely be our own," and I believe this is God's work.

I welcome your questions.