



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
OFFICE OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

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**Contacts:** Lt. Governor Pat Quinn  
(o) 312-814-5220; (c) 312-485-1852  
Elizabeth Austin (o) (312) 814-8760

**OPERATION HERO MILES LETTER TO THE EDITOR**  
**By Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn**

On Memorial Day, 22-year-old Army SPC David Gonzalez was serving his country in Iraq when a bomb went off under his vehicle on a Baghdad road. In that instant, the life of that young Illinois man was changed forever, and he and his family embarked on a long, emotional journey toward recovery.

Critically injured by the bombing, David was airlifted to safety -- first to a military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, then to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Within just a few days, his parents, Mike and Katherine Gonzalez, were at his bedside, able to hold their son's hand, talk face-to-face with his doctors, and pray beside him.

Today, David Gonzalez remains partially paralyzed from the waist down, but he and his doctors at the new Spinal Cord Injury Center at Hines VA Hospital Hines VA Hospital say he is recovering well and looking forward to a long and productive life.

Thanks to the Operation Hero Miles program -- and the support of citizens like you -- Mike and Katherine Gonzalez and hundreds of military families like them have been able to bring their love and support to wounded heroes at military medical centers.

Operation Hero Miles collects frequent flyer miles from business travelers and tourists, and converts those unused bonus miles into free airline tickets for the family members of men and women wounded in the Global War on Terror. Fisher House Foundation administers Operation Hero Miles and also offers a network of 32 "comfort homes" around the world, providing a home away from home at little or no cost for anxious families of injured service members at military hospitals.

This month, as you embark on another business trip or plan an end-of-summer vacation getaway with your family, I hope you will think about the sacrifices being made for all of us by the many young men and women serving in the Global War on Terror. Here on the homefront, we can give real support to our troops overseas by donating our unused frequent flyer miles to Operation Hero Miles and sending a voluntary contribution to the Fisher House Foundation.

With your support, Operation Hero Miles has provided more than 6,000 tickets worth more than \$8 million to the families of men and women injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Fisher House has offered a comfortable, affordable place to stay to more than 8,500 families each year.

Here in the Land of Lincoln, we all have a duty to honor those who fight for our freedom by supporting them and their families when they need our help. For more information on making a donation to Fisher House and Operation Hero Miles, please visit [www.OperationHomefront.org](http://www.OperationHomefront.org).

As we enjoy this last month of summer, I hope we all will keep our brave men and women fighting overseas and their families in our thoughts and prayers

Sincerely,

Pat Quinn  
Lt. Governor

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