

**TOM MIELKE**  
**2015 State of the County**  
**March 12, 2015**

Thank you, Jeanne. It's great to have you on the Board of County Councilors.

Today, I get to talk about something near and dear to my heart that the citizens of Clark County provide for veterans.

My experience and perspective were partially honed when I served with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Infantry Division during 15 months of combat in Vietnam. Not so much at the time, but I am proud of my service and the Bronze Star I earned.

To say that I came home with a chip on my shoulder is a bit of an understatement. When I returned to Washington state, I was more than a little upset with anti-war demonstrators, the name calling and the anger directed at those who served our country with honor, dignity and distinction.

The Vietnam War wasn't a popular war, but no war is. The men and women who served there didn't deserve to be vilified when they returned home. It took a long time to thank those who served then. We don't want to make the same mistake again!

I think we can all agree about honoring men and women who have served this country in wars of the past. Now we have our heroes returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

They have done an outstanding job under tremendously difficult circumstances. They deserve our thanks and gratitude.

Veterans are returning home to Clark County and thousands of other communities across this great nation. We have veterans walk in by the dozens every day. I am surprised that some still have not heard about the Clark County Veterans Assistance Center.

The center assists veterans and their families in obtaining benefits, services and resources to meet basic needs and support their return to civilian life. The county's Veterans Assistance Fund helps provide emergency assistance to qualified veterans for rent, utilities, clothing and prescriptions.

Anyone who knows me knows I hold a strong line on taxes any chance I get, but I am proud that Clark County has stepped up and chosen the local option to fund these veterans' services.

There are many organizations that help our veterans, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans Association and nationally, the Wounded Warrior Project, and many more. I feel so strong about this that I make a point of contributing every year. I encourage all the others to do it also.

It's a blessing these organizations exist because the need is enormous. The Veterans Administration needs to do more, but until it does, we need to fill the gap. I wish that were not the case, but it is.

I was fortunate. When I came home from Vietnam, I returned to a job I left. Sadly, some veterans returning home today are not so lucky.

So here's my plea: this to employees of Clark County, Clark County has been very successful with its employees.

Our economy is definitely picking up, something you will hear more about from Councilor Madore. We have been very successful, as Councilor Stewart indicated. We will stay the course and take it one day at a time. As our community moves ahead, I want to make sure we include the men and women who have served in the armed forces.

Veterans entering or returning to the work force have an assortment of skills from computer programming to equipment repair. Military experience taught them how to work together as a team under the most difficult circumstances imaginable. Surely we can find places for them in many fine businesses throughout Clark County.

I'm asking companies in our community to remember veterans. No one knows better than a veteran how to get the job done.

Now I would like to hear from a veteran who served in the U.S. Navy. Please join me in welcoming David Madore, current chair of the Board of County Councilors.