

## ***DEBT OF HONOR***

### **NEH and PBS Join Forces to Spark National Conversation About Disabled Veterans**

#### **Documentary by Award-Winning Filmmaker Ric Burns Illuminates Struggles and Triumphs of Disabled Veterans in American History**

**DEBT OF HONOR** examines the way in which the American government and society as a whole have regarded disabled veterans throughout history, beginning in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War and continuing through today's conflicts in the Middle East. The film combines personal stories, told by distinguished disabled veterans, with deep history narrated by leading scholars in the fields of disability studies, history and psychology to illustrate the human cost of war and the enormous sacrifices of military service. These sacrifices are brought to life through hundreds of carefully curated still images and archival footage from across the country.

"The goal of this film is to try to understand the realities and challenges that disabled veterans have faced throughout history and continue to face today," says Burns. "There is a real necessity to bridge the gap between civilians and those who have served in the military. It is our hope that the film will encourage a candid discussion in communities across the country, and create understanding and awareness of the sacrifices involved in military service."

Beth Hoppe, Chief Programming Officer and General Manager, General Audience Programming, PBS, said, "PBS has broadcast numerous documentaries and programs that highlight the reality of life in the military, as well as in-depth shows that focus on some of the challenges confronted by returning veterans. We look forward to sharing the film with all Americans timed to this coming Veterans Day." "As a Vietnam veteran, I believe this initiative will help in bridging the divide between the military and public," says NEH Chairman William Adams. "NEH is committed to projects that use the humanities to inspire public discussion of the important issues of our time, and this new film offers a compelling way to open up meaningful dialogue about the service and sacrifice of disabled veterans."

Lois Pope, a noted philanthropist and the film's underwriter, says, "This film is about the human costs of war. It should serve to remind and educate all of us about the courageous men and women who have sacrificed parts of their bodies and minds fighting for our country."

A poignant tribute to the history of disabled veterans in the U.S., **DEBT OF HONOR** is an unflinching portrait of the realities of warfare and disabilities. The program features illuminating interviews with some of the country's most prominent disabled veterans, including U.S. Representative Tammy Duckworth (Illinois); former U.S. Senator and Veterans Affairs Administrator Max Cleland (Georgia); former Garrison Commander of Fort Belvoir, Col. Gregory Gadson; and actor, motivational speaker and Iraq War Army veteran J.R. Martinez. Gadson, a double amputee veteran of the war in Iraq who shares his experiences on camera, calls **DEBT OF HONOR** "one of the most accurate and balanced productions I have ever seen. It should be mandatory viewing for all high school civics classes."

**DEBT OF HONOR: DISABLED VETERANS IN AMERICAN HISTORY** is a production of Steeplechase Films. Directed by Ric Burns. Produced by Ric Burns, Bonnie Lafave and Nat Rosa. Co-producer, Josh

Woltermann. Edited by Mikaela Shwer. WETA is the presenting station. Funding was provided by Lois Pope. National Outreach supported by a grant from The National Endowment of Humanities.

**DEBT OF HONOR** is part of [PBS Stories of Service](#), a multiplatform initiative that explores veterans' experiences and provides a deeper understanding of our country's military history. Stories of Service was announced in May 2014 as part of an initiative with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to share veterans' stories, provide a deeper understanding of our nation's military history, and increase dialogue as our nation's veterans transition to civilian life. The initiative includes national, multi-platform content as part of **Stories of Service** on PBS, and funding by CPB for local station productions, national productions, and community engagement as part of [Veterans Coming Home](#).

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