



K A N S A S

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

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Nicole Corcoran, Press Secretary
785.368.8500

The following is a column from Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

Merry Christmas Kansas

As ice and snow blanketed the state last week, thousands of Kansas homes were left without power. School children crossed their fingers hoping for cancelled classes, Kansans checked in on their neighbors and a brave few still stood in line to purchase a coveted gift. But despite the destruction, the winter landscape looked beautiful as it sparkled and glistened, reminding us of the holiday season upon us.

Many things define the holiday season: a tall stately tree twinkling with lights, a warm mug of hot chocolate topped with whipped cream, garnished with a candy cane, and the hope for a fresh layer of snow to greet children on Christmas morning. But first and foremost, holidays are about spending time with friends and family.

Travel for many is hindered by the winter weather. Ice and snow make for dangerous road conditions and traffic slows to a crawl. Despite Mother Nature, most Kansans will make it home for the holidays including 430 Kansas National Guard soldiers.

The soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery deployed after Thanksgiving to Ft. Bliss, Texas to train for deployment to Iraq. I asked Kansans to donate funds for travel to ensure the soldiers could spend the Christmas holiday with their loved ones before deploying later this winter.

I was overwhelmed, but not surprised, by the generosity of Kansans who donated over \$146,000 to bring the troops home. What a wonderful gift Kansans gave these soldiers-- the opportunity to spend the holidays with their families before deploying overseas.

I regret that we cannot return all soldiers to their families for Christmas. I imagine the holidays are one of the most difficult times for soldiers to be separated from their loved ones. I urge Kansans to continue to honor and support our men and women in the military this season by sending a letter of thanks and keeping them in your prayers.

I wish every Kansan safe travels and happy holidays. And for those who cannot be with loved ones this Christmas, I wish you peace.

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