



An Open Letter to former State Senator Curtis Hertel, Jr.

December 19, 2023

Sen. Curtis Hertel, Jr.



Dear Senator Hertel:

We, the undersigned veterans of U.S. military service, write to you today to express our deep concern over your conscious decision to wear of an official U.S. Army-issued uniform while speaking at a Veterans Day event last month in Lansing, despite not having served in the Army or any other branch of the U.S. military. We respectfully request that you publicly apologize to all American veterans, in Michigan and elsewhere, and pledge not to repeat the offense.

As you must be aware, wearing official military-issue attire, especially at a ceremony honoring those who have served, leaves the clear and unmistakable impression that you personally served in uniform. As a public servant who has frequently professed to support veterans and veterans' issues, you must also know that this brand of "stolen valor" is frowned upon.

These are the facts as we understand them:

- On November 11, 2023, you attended a Veterans Day wreath laying ceremony at the Michigan Veterans Memorial at the State Capitol in Lansing.
- Though you were not on the speaking program, you persuaded the organizers to allow you to address the assembled audience.
- During the course of your brief remarks, you wore a U.S. Army-issued physical fitness uniform jacket.
- You posed for photographs with uniformed military and veterans.
- At no point did you explain to the audience that you did not serve in the military, even though the jacket you wore left that impression.

While the jacket you wore that day is a retired uniform, it is intrinsically linked to the Global War on Terror era of military service. This is a period in which you were eligible to have served, further substantiating the impression that you are a veteran. Additionally, because you were not issued the jacket by the Army, you must have obtained it from someone who was, which means you were aware of its status as an official uniform when you acquired it.

There are Army regulations and federal statutes that govern who may wear official military uniforms, but we do not need to delve into those complexities for the purposes of this letter. And we won't challenge anyone's First Amendment right to express themselves freely, as we all pledged to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States in our induction oaths.

But we also believe that there are some things that one should not do, even if one has the right to do them. Wearing an official military uniform when you did not serve is one of those things – especially at a Veterans Day event.

You will note that at the top of this letter, we referred to you as Senator, a title you earned by winning election to that office, even if you no longer serve in that capacity. We ask that you reciprocate, return the favor to veterans, and refrain from wearing a military uniform you did not earn through sweat and blood.

We hope you grasp why we were disturbed, agree with our reasoning on this matter, and follow through with the requested apology.

We are, sincerely:

NAME	SIGNATURE	BRANCH & Date
<u>ROBERT E. BRETTE</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US ARMY 1991-2023 OIFII</u>
<u>Laura Goldthwaite</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>MI Army Nebraska ¹⁹⁸⁷⁻¹⁹⁹⁸ 1987-1998</u>
<u>James Ramirez</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US ARMY / 1967-1970</u>
<u>Gregory D. Hill</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USMC / 1967-1973</u>
<u>Robert Boring</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USAF / 1980-2001</u>
<u>Carl Kuch</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USN / 1962-1965 / 1975-1995</u>
<u>Bob Kuch</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USN / 1969-1973</u>
<u>DUANE HORSINGT.</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>⁷⁰⁻⁷ US ARMY - VIETNAM</u>
<u>Jon Luker</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US ARMY 67-71</u>
<u>ROBERT D. WILLIAMS</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US ARMY 71-77</u>

NAME	SIGNATURE	BRANCH & Date
<u>David Hervey</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>ARMY 6/77-7/80</u>
<u>MARK EPLEY</u>	<u>Mark SSG</u>	<u>NAVY 12/75-12/79</u>
<u>Michael Schback</u>	<u>MS Schback</u>	<u>ARMY 1979-1988</u>
<u>Larry GULICK</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USMC 1989-2010</u>
<u>BILL GOLDTHWAIT</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USAF 1984-2005</u>
<u>Steve Whitney</u>	<u>STEVE WHITNEY</u>	<u>ARMY 1969-1971</u>
<u>Jim Clore</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>Army 1955-1958</u>
<u>TOMMY SIDELKA</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USAF 1962-1968</u>
<u>Jim Thompson</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USMC 68-72</u>
<u>Richard Watters</u>	<u>Richard Watters</u>	<u>USMC 65-67</u>
<u>DAVID FISHER</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US AIR FORCE 62-65</u>
<u>Robert Mowmy</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>ARMY 1983-1989</u>
<u>Scot Stoned</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USMC 1982-86</u>
<u>STEVE SAMBORSKI</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>USMC 92-96</u>
<u>Robert E. Jackson</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>US ARMY</u>

NAME	SIGNATURE	BRANCH & Date 66-70
<u>Tom GREEN</u>	<u>Thomas Green</u>	<u>USN 1971</u>
<u>RALPH SHARP</u>	<u>Ralph Sharp</u>	<u>US ARMY</u>
<u>Keri Brite</u>	<u>Keri Brite</u>	<u>U.S. ARMY 92-96</u>