

Seth E. Jensen

Supporting our Soldiers in Times of War

When a country goes to war, there are many factors that go into that decision, like the chance of success, the consequences of not fighting, and public support. It is essential that the public supports the war; otherwise, the soldiers may lose heart. The populace may not help the war effort and may even become a detriment to the country. They may cause riots, create numerous petitions to get out of the war, or simply refuse to help. But if the people do support the war, they can do many things to make sure that they win. They can respond to draft notices, send donations to the soldiers, and do other things to help. For example, in World War 2, Boy Scouts gathered scrap metal, grease, and other items that could be recycled into useful materials for the Allied forces. Boy Scouts also planted "Victory Gardens" to conserve food, and even volunteered to work on farms and ranches to replace those serving in the military¹.

Sometimes a family can't do much for the war effort. Maybe they are poor and can't donate money or food. Maybe none in the family can serve as a soldier. This is understandable. Not everyone can serve in an obvious way. But they can still help. They can do little things, like working at a factory that makes items for the war, like bullets or tanks. Or they could send care packages to the soldiers. If they can't do this, they can just support the military by following the laws so domestic law enforcement doesn't need to spend as much, thereby permitting more to be spent on the war effort. Families can also support the soldiers by participating in activities like Wreaths Across America, where wreaths are put on grave markers for soldiers. This may not help the actual war, but it lets the soldiers know that their country believes in them.

An example from my ancestry is Abraham Lay, who was born around 1700 in the British Isles. He came to America in 1715 as a cabin boy on the ship Robert & John. He lived in Fairfax County, Virginia, and then later in Loudon County, Virginia.² During the Revolutionary War, he was too old to fight, but that didn't stop him from supporting the struggle. He and his son Stephen provided supplies such as beef to the American Continental Army^{3,4}. Even at the age of 75, he still contributed to the war effort.

Some think that we don't need to help the soldiers because they believe that the military will take care of them. This is partially true. The military does take care of the soldiers. But we take care of the military. We provide support, money donations, as well as non-perishable food and care packages for the soldiers. We can shake the hands of men and women in uniform and thank them for their service. We can also let our elected representatives know that we support our military. If we don't take care of the military, it can't take care of the soldiers.

As shown by my ancestor Abraham Lay, there is always a way to help the military in time of war, even if it is a small contribution. Every bit counts.

[499 words]

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References:

¹ Willis, Chuck. *BoyScoutsofAmerica/A CentennialHistory*. New York, New York: Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2009, p. 114.

² Kohler, Charmaine L *Southern Grace*. Boise, Idaho: The Beagle Creek Press, 2005, pp. 18-23.

³ Abercrombie, Janice L and Slatten, Richard, compo *Virginia Revolutionary "Publick" Claims*. 3 vols. Athens, Georgia: Iberian Pub. Co., 1992, v. 2 p. 613.

⁴ *Loudon County, Virginia: 1780-1783 Minute Book; Entries for 9 Apri/1782* (On the Internet: <http://vagensearch.com/AmericanRevolution/PatrioticService/1782April9.html>. Accessed 31 December 2013.)