

OMAHA - U.S. Senator Ben Nelson and Congressman Lee Terry today announced they will attend a banquet and ceremony on July 5, 2007, in Omaha to present Congressional Gold Medals to four Tuskegee Airmen from Nebraska.

Senators Nelson and Chuck Hagel and Congressmen Terry and Jeff Fortenberry were co-sponsors of the legislation to honor the Tuskegee Airmen with Congressional Gold Medals in recognition of their unique military record, which inspired revolutionary reform in the armed forces. The Tuskegee Airmen were instrumental in fully integrating America's military.

The Nebraska Tuskegee Airmen who will receive Congressional Gold Medals at the Omaha ceremony are Lt. Col. Charles Lane of Omaha, Lt. Col. Harrison Tull of Bellevue, Cpl. Robert Holts of Omaha and Lt. Colonel Paul Adams of Lincoln.

Lane, the youngest black fighter pilot in World War II and father to long-time Terry staffer Karen Davis, said: "I'm very pleased with this recognition because I always thought we were the best kept secret of World War II. The fact is that blacks were flying combat missions and giving cover to B-17s and B-24s. This is an honor past due but finally recognized."

Congressman Terry said: "We honor the Tuskegee Airmen for their fight against fascism abroad while overcoming discrimination at home. I am humbled for this opportunity to honor American heroes from Nebraska. I hope and pray that the story of the Tuskegee Airmen is never forgotten, but instead studied and embraced by each generation. We must never forget the lessons from the heroes that are the Tuskegee Airmen: Fascism and racism have no place in our world."

Senator Nelson said: "I am proud to be able to publicly honor Nebraska's Tuskegee Airmen who are true American patriots. Their heroism during wartime is a fascinating story by itself but what gives them the 'Living Legend' status is their much broader achievement that resulted in racial integration of the armed services."

Senator Hagel said: "The courage, sacrifice and service of Nebraska's Tuskegee Airmen are the foundation of America's greatness. Despite enduring racism, bigotry and social injustice both at home and overseas, the Tuskegee Airmen performed their duties with unswerving commitment to their country. They inspired us and will continue to serve as role models for future generations. We recognize and thank all those who have served or are serving our country in the uniform of the United States Armed Forces."

Congressman Fortenberry said: "The Tuskegee Airmen were members of the 'Greatest Generation,' serving our nation with excellence, honor, and dignity in a time of great challenge and adversity. They fought for America and its foundations - liberty, justice, and hope - and through their efforts both as airmen and as agents of social change, they helped preserve it." In April, Fortenberry honored Lt. Col. Adams in a Lincoln ceremony.

The award ceremony and banquet are open to the public and news media.

July 5, 2007

6:30 p.m. CST

Doubletree Hotel

1616 Dodge Street

Omaha

