

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman  
2005  
BRAC Speech

Ladies and gentleman – citizens of Beaufort County; this is a happy day. This is a day to be grateful.

I know all of you here today share my appreciation for Col. John Payne and the members of his Military Enhancement Committee for their tireless and successful campaign to retain Beaufort County's military bases. Col. Payne; on behalf of the citizens of Beaufort County; please accept our sincere gratitude. Thank you, sir.

As we express our relief and our joy over this good news, please know that your Beaufort County Council – along with Col. Payne and his MEC - will remain watchful until the President gives final approval to the list of closures in the fall.

As we all well know, our three military installations contribute nearly \$ ½ billion dollars in payroll and contracts to our local economy. Beaufort County made an investment of \$250,000 toward the efforts of the Military Enhancement Committee, which proves our high regard for our local installations as well as our deep esteem for Col. John Payne and his committee. Our investment has paid off. The addition of 12 civilian jobs along with the retention of our local facilities proves that Washington knows what we all know – that Beaufort County is a good neighbor and a good partner to our local military installations.

It wasn't only our cash investment that helped us succeed in this effort; it was our great relationship with our three local facilities and their leaders. In the past couple of years, through that great relationship, Beaufort County has formed new partnerships and initiated new projects that have benefited all citizens, both military and civilian Washington noticed this and has recognized our good will and our ability to support our local military.

Officials with the Department of Defense realize the value of keeping our service personnel here in Beaufort County. They know we appreciate and support them and embrace them as our own. Beaufort County's culture and history have been closely allied with its military installations and its military citizens. Beaufort County has deep affection for its marines and its sailors and Washington knows this. We have demonstrated this many times.

You may wonder why we have displayed the red, white and blue quilts here in council chambers today. They are work of ladies in our community and represent the patriotism and caring for our military that prevails here in Beaufort County. These are "quilts of honor" made by a group of ladies in Bluffton and will be given to wounded military personnel returning from hazardous duty. We wanted them

here today to reflect the kind of support the citizens of Beaufort County have shown toward our military. These ladies have made more than 160 quilts and are still making them through community donations for materials.

Prior to today's announcement, Beaufort County Council and our Military Enhancement Committee did all that was humanly possible to convince the Department of Defense of our high regard for our installations and make known our exceptional relationship with our military.

One effort that has cast Beaufort County in a positive light includes being the first local government in the nation to partner with the United States of America by and through the Department of the Navy for the protection of a Marine Corps facility from encroachment under specific federal legislation. We have also demonstrated the ability of our local governments, the Lowcountry Council of Governments and our military to work cooperatively and swiftly to create a valuable Joint Land Use Study which helps protect our air station by regulating nearby development.

The DOD obviously viewed all of our cooperative efforts favorably. We have proven, once again, that Beaufort County is a rightful and hospitable "home" for the Marine Corps Air Station, the Naval Hospital and the Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

Yes, today we are grateful, but we must remain attentive to political winds that could change direction. We must remain watchful, alert and active. The military has given much to Beaufort County and Beaufort County will persist in doing its best to give it back.