

We are here today to honor our service members and veterans, and remember the sacrifices they have made and the courage it takes to defend honor, duty, and country.

We are here to honor our heroes, to remember their achievements, their dedication, and to say thank you for their sacrifices. Thinking of the heroes who are here today and those who are here only in spirit, a person can't help but feel awed by the enormity of what we see. We stand in the midst of patriots and the family and friends of those who have nobly served in the Armed Forces.

Our debt to these heroes can never be re-paid, but our gratitude and respect must last forever.

For many veterans, our nation was important enough to endure long separations from their families, miss the births of their children, freeze in sub-zero temperatures, bake in wild jungles, lose limbs, and, far too often, lose their lives.

Military spouses have had to endure career interruptions, frequent changes of address, and a disproportionate share of parental responsibilities.

The children often had to deal with changes in schools, separation from friends and, hardest of all, the uncertainty of whether or not Mom or Dad will live through their next combat tour.

The service members and veterans we honor today came from all walks of life, but they share several fundamental qualities. They possess courage, pride, determination, selflessness, dedication to duty, and integrity – all the qualities needed to serve a cause larger than one's self.

These veterans didn't ask to leave their homes to fight on distant battlefields. Many didn't even volunteer. They didn't go to war because they loved fighting. They were called to be part of something bigger than themselves. They were ordinary people who responded in extraordinary ways in extreme times. They rose to the nation's call because they wanted to protect a nation which has given them, and us, so much.

It doesn't matter whether they served during a time of war or a time of peace. The veterans do not get to choose. For those who served during peace time, let us remember that peace can turn to war in a matter of minutes. The call to duty, honor, and country remains the same no matter the time.

It doesn't matter whether a veteran served overseas or here in the United States. Again, the veteran did not get to choose. The needs of our Country supersede the wishes of the individual.

The commitment to duty, honor, and country exemplify what a veteran believes. When a person raises their hand and takes the Oath of Enlistment, they become members of the Armed Forces. They are willing to suffer the sacrifices it takes being in the Armed Forces so that our country can stay safe and strong.

Thank you, and God Bless our Veterans and the United States of America.

In closing, I would like to read a poem I found:

The Noble and the Brave: A Veteran's Day Tribute

When America had an urgent need,
These brave ones raised a hand;
No hesitation held them back;
They were proud to take a stand.

They left their friends and family;
They gave up normal life;
To serve their country and their God,
They plowed into the strife.

They fought for freedom and for peace
On strange and foreign shores;
Some lost new friends; some lost their lives
In long and brutal wars.

Other veterans answered a call
To support the ones who fought;
Their country had requirements for
The essential skills they brought.

We salute every one of them,
The noble and the brave,
The ones still with us here today,
And those who rest in a grave.

So here's to our country's heroes;
They're a cut above the rest;
Let's give the honor that is due
To our country's very best.

Thank you, and God Bless our Veterans and the United States of America.