

Today, we have the privilege to pay honor and respect to all the men and women who have served their country in the Armed Forces. We are here to say Thank You for the sacrifices that you have made.

Veterans Day gives all of us the opportunity to recognize those who have served in the military. This day is meant to celebrate the choice that our service members and veterans have made to serve our country.

It has always been said that serving in the military is a sacrifice. That is a true statement. But have we thought about all the sacrifices that those men and women have given? Some of those sacrifices are obvious, the wounds suffered in combat, the stresses that come from serving in a war zone. But most of us have not thought about many of the other sacrifices that service members give for their country.

While we are in the military, we have to give up many of the same freedoms that we pledged to defend. We don't get to choose how we dress. We don't get a choice in what job we want to do. We give up the right to decide what country and what city we want to live in. We don't get to choose where we want to live. We have no choice in who will be living in the barracks with us. If we are sent to a foreign country, often we are not allowed to have our family with us. Many times, we lose the right to be with family and loved ones during the holidays. We don't get the right to quit when times are hard. We are required to endure long separations from our families, and miss many of the important events of family life. We know that we may be required to put our lives on the line to defend our country.

These sacrifices are common across all the branches of the service. It doesn't matter if its during a time of war or a time of peace. It doesn't matter if you are stationed in a foreign country or here in the United States. These are just some of the sacrifices that all of us who have served have had to endure.

There are many reasons why our veterans chose to serve. Many of us volunteered for the military, others were drafted. We came from all walks of life. As we entered the service, we probably did not have a lot in common with our fellow service men and women. But as we served, we recognized several common bonds. We rose to the call of service and we committed ourselves to defend our country and our freedoms. We learned to be members of a team. We learned to have pride, determination, dedication to duty, and integrity. We may not

have had those attributes when we entered the service, but we certainly had them by the time we left the military.

It doesn't matter whether we served during a time of war or a time of peace, nor does it matter if we served overseas or here in the United States. The veterans did 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 as it did on December 7, 1941, and again on September 11, 2001.

Less than 10 percent of our citizens have served in the Armed Forces. Let us use this opportunity to celebrate their service to our nation and their commitment to duty, honor, and country. Our veterans were willing to write a blank check payable to the United States of America for any amount, up to and including their lives.

On this holiday, please take a few moments to think of our freedoms and liberties that we all enjoy. Remember that it is the Veterans in the community who have given part of their lives to defend and protect those values. Our Veterans were willing to put their lives on the line to defend all of us.

For all those veterans here today – Thank You for your service and your sacrifice.

For all those who did not serve, thank you for sharing this special day with us and showing your support for our heroes, past and present.

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