

Today, we gather here to pay honor and tribute to our service members and veterans who served in the Armed Forces. We are here to say Thank You for their service and their sacrifices.

Serving in the military requires a sacrifice. Once a person enlists in the military they do not get some of the choices available in normal civilian life. We did not get to choose what to do, or where to live. And during time of war, we were not asked if we wanted to serve in a combat zone. The military doesn't operate that way. The status of Veteran applies to all those who gave some of their life to the military, whether it was in time of war or time of peace. It does not matter whether a veteran served in a foreign land or here in the United States, they all answered the call to duty, honor, and country.

There is a quote from an unknown author that identifies the commitment and sacrifice:

What is a Veteran? A "Veteran" – whether active duty, discharged, retired, or reserve – is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America" for an amount of "up to, and including, their life."

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.

It doesn't matter whether they served during a time of war or a time of peace. 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 at Pearl Harbor and again on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center.

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.

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

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