

Memorial Day is a day unlike any other. Since 1868 we have come together in our communities, cities, and towns to place flowers and flags on the graves of those who have given their last full measure of devotion to our country. We come here to remember and honor those who have done their duty and paid the ultimate price. They gave their lives to protect and defend our country and our freedom.

For most families, the Memorial Day weekend kicks off the season of barbecues, family get togethers, parties, and all sorts of other outdoor fun. But Memorial Day means much more than that. It is a time to honor and remember all the American Servicemen and women who died defending our freedom and our right to be free.

We must remember that it's the Soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press. It's the Soldier, not the poet, who gave us the freedom of speech. It's the Soldier, not the politicians, that ensures us our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It's the Soldier who salutes the Flag, who serves beneath the Flag and whose coffin is draped by the Flag.

The men and women we honor today came from all walks of life. They had different backgrounds, different heritages, and different religions. But they all shared a common goal, to serve and protect our nation and our freedom.

In our local cemeteries, you will find the headstones of veterans who served in all the major wars. These include the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

On this Memorial Day, try and take some time, even if just a few

minutes, to think and remember those men and women from our hometown and from across the Country who have served and died. We must never forget the sacrifice these men and women have paid to defend our freedom.

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