

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

Whether it was service during WWII, Korea, the jungles of Vietnam, the canal in Panama, the deserts of Iraq, the mountains in Afghanistan, the standoff at the Iron Curtain during the cold war, or during one of the many peacekeeping missions, our veterans rose to the call of service. For these 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.

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. 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. 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, nor does it matter if they 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. The call to duty, honor, and country remains the same no matter the time or place.

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.