

**The
American
Legion**



For God and Country

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VETERANS DAY SPEECH 2020

The American Legion
Media & Communications Division
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Veterans, Friends of Veterans, Family and
Legionnaires,

Seven decades ago, in 1950, brave Americans defended a far-off land that was under attack. For three years they fought what many still call, “the Forgotten war.”

We are here to remember. We are here to honor not just those brave Korean War veterans, but ALL who have served in the U.S. military since our country’s founding.

Jack Sauter served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. Many years later, he wrote in The American Legion Magazine that he had doubts whether the outcome of the war was worth the cost of lives and treasure.

But after the war he was greeted in his New York insurance office by a Korean immigrant. “I was very young when the war started,” she told him in an emotionally cracked voice. “We lived on the Han River, just south of Seoul. My family walked to Pusan! Thank you for saving my country!”

Sauter said his encounter with that woman put his last doubt to rest. It WAS worth it.

Regardless of how one feels about policies that lead to war, let there be no doubt that veterans serve with honor. They serve to make life better for others. They preserve our freedom.

Not all veterans have seen war, but a common bond that they share is an oath in which they expressed their willingness to die defending this nation.

Perhaps most significant in preserving our way of life are the battles that America does not have to fight because those who wish us harm slink away in fear of the Coast Guard cutter, the Navy aircraft carrier, the Air Force fighter squadron, the Marine Corps fire team or the Army soldier on patrol.

And we are excited to add a new group of people to the ranks of veteran – the men and women of the United States Space Force.

We can be secure at home because we have brave warriors protecting us in the air, at sea, on land and beyond our atmosphere.

In addition to foreign adversaries, many veterans have had to battle invisible threats to their mental health and well-being.

More than twenty veterans a day take their own lives. Only those who experienced firsthand the horrors of combat can understand why so many of these young men and women feel compelled to take such drastic and permanent measures.

The U.S. Army recently reported a 30 percent increase in suicides among its active-duty troops in 2020.

We must do everything possible to stop these needless deaths. The American Legion has instituted a Buddy Check program, in which we encourage our members to regularly communicate with our fellow veterans. See if they need help. Offer your hands in friendship.

Those of us gathered here to observe Veterans Day have already indicated our support for the outstanding men and women who have served our country. Tell veterans directly that you love them. That you appreciate them. That you are grateful for their service.

We are their friends, their family, their co-workers and their neighbors. It is up to us to ensure that every veteran feels that his or her service to this country is appreciated by their fellow Americans. There are many tangible ways that we can acknowledge their sacrifice, but the easiest is to simply say, "Thank you for what you have done for our country."

If he is showing signs of unhappiness or depression, encourage him to seek help through the VA immediately. If she has had difficulty obtaining the benefits that she is entitled to, let her know that The American Legion has thousands of trained service officers nationwide that will help her navigate the bureaucracy free of charge.

And if that veteran has made the Supreme Sacrifice, remember the price that has been paid for our freedom and offer your support to the loved ones left behind.

Remember how occasions like this started. On the Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month – November 11, 1918 – the guns stopped. It was a moment to be celebrated as the largest and deadliest war – up until that time – came to a merciful end.

We still celebrate that moment, only today we call it Veterans Day. War is never anything to celebrate, but peace is. The peace in between these horrific wars is brought to you mainly by our veterans.

The sacrifice brought forth during those wars, is also made mostly by our veterans. That does not mean others don't suffer. Civilians are often killed and nobody understands sacrifice more than our Gold Star families.

We honor our fallen on Memorial Day – although The American Legion remembers them EVERYDAY.

Veterans Day, however, is for ALL who served. While many veterans are humble, there is no such thing as insignificant military service.

It is why The American Legion only requires a single day of honorable military service to join our ranks. We understand that isn't just the sacrifice and service that are important, but the WILLINGNESS to offer your life in defense of this nation that sets veterans apart.

Veterans Day is an important but symbolic way of saying thanks. But we should insist that our elected officials produce meaningful laws and public policies that will enhance the quality of life for veterans and their families.

The American Legion is dedicated to remembering the legacy of all veterans because what these men and women have done for us, matters to America. It matters to the people overseas who were liberated from tyranny due to the sacrifices of our military members.

From defeating Communism, Fascism and Imperialism, to liberating slaves, keeping the peace during the Cold War and battling terrorism today, veterans have accomplished remarkable things throughout our nation's history.

If you're an employer, give extra weight to the experience and skills of the sailor-turned-job-applicant. Veterans' preference is a requirement for government jobs, but it is also smart business for the private sector as well.

When an American Legion Auxiliary member asks for a donation for a poppy, remember the World War II veteran in a hospital bed.

When a member of Congress complains about the cost of compensating Vietnam War veterans for Agent Orange exposure, remind the lawmaker of the cost of being a veteran.

In spite of the sacrifices that nearly all veterans have made and the horrors that some have experienced, the overwhelming majority are proud to have served.

Nineteenth century British philosopher John Stuart Mill summed up the necessity of this special group of people when he wrote:

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

Mill had it right. Fortunately, for all of us, America has been blessed throughout its history by many such men and women.

Thank you for being here, God Bless America and God Bless our veterans.

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