



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Suggested Speech For Flag Day 2024

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The American Flag is not just a patriotic decoration. It is not a political prop. It is instead a symbol. A symbol of the hopes, dreams and realities for millions of citizens.

Included among those citizens is country music artist Neal McCoy. For more than 3,000 consecutive days now, McCoy has recited the Pledge of Allegiance. He has reached millions of viewers around the world through his daily streaming of the pledge every morning live on Facebook.

“I want people to know where I stand,” he said to a newspaper reporter. “I love our country and I always have.” – unquote.

McCoy is not alone in his affection for the U.S.A. This gathering is proof of that.

For those who view our flag as a mere piece of cloth, the pledge directly refutes that notion in its opening words. “I Pledge Allegiance **TO** the Flag of the United States America and **TO** the Republic for Which It Stands.” In this phrase, Americans profess their loyalty to the red, white and blue banner and the nation that it represents.

The pledge is recited each morning by children in classrooms across America. The American Flag is present at every official meeting of The American Legion and the pledge is included in its manual of ceremonies.

Flag etiquette and education are major programs for The American Legion and fall under one of the organization’s founding pillars.

Three years prior to the creation of The American Legion, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation establishing June 14th as Flag Day. It also happens to fall on the birthday of the United States Army, doubling the day’s significance.

In 1917, President Wilson shared his thoughts about Old Glory.

Quote: “The flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. It floats in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices, whether in peace or in war. And yet, though silent, it speaks to us – speaks to us of the past, of the men and women who went before us, and of the records they wrote upon it.” – unquote.

While Americans are always proud of the flag, we see increases in sales and displays of our colors after national tragedies such as 9/11 or during patriotic holidays. We celebrate our flag when we send astronauts to the moon, achieve victory in war or win Olympic Gold. It is the same blanket of freedom that covers the caskets of our nation’s veterans.

Though the flag can give us great comfort and hope, we should especially appreciate the freedom that it symbolizes. One man who lost that freedom for several torturous years was Navy Lieutenant Mike Christian.

Lieutenant Christian was 27 when his fighter jet was shot down over Vietnam in 1967. He was imprisoned at the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

As the weeks of his captivity dragged into months and then years, Christian knew that he and his fellow POWs needed a constant reminder of home and of the values for which they had been defending.

He began gathering bits of twine and string and paper from the compound, and any berries or plants that he could use to color them.

Fashioning a needle from a piece of bamboo, Christian began the tedious job of sewing a U.S. Flag to the inside of his prison tunic, where it would be hidden from the enemy but still close to his heart.

After months of scrounging, Christian spent hour upon endless hour of secretly sewing by the light of the moon. To be caught engaging in this activity would mean certain and severe punishment by the enemy. After much effort and time, the flag was finally finished.

Quietly and out of the sight of the guards, Christian removed his tunic and displayed the flag sewed inside, as he and his fellow POWs saluted it, and whispered their Pledge of Allegiance to it and all that it stood for.

Fellow POW Bud Day recalls that this was the happiest time of each day because it reminded them of home. It reminded them of their loved ones. And it gave them hope that they would once again see the country they loved. Early one morning a Vietnamese guard caught a glimpse of Christian's flag. Christian was dragged away and interrogated.

Throughout the day, his fellow POWs heard his screams of agony as the Vietnamese tortured him and beat him without mercy.

Finally, they dragged him back to his cell, and there they dumped him – unconscious, bloodied and beaten.

Bud Day said that he treated Christian's wounds as best as possible, but he had no medicine and there was little that could be done to relieve his agony.

Yet, a few days later – late in the night – there was Mike Christian huddled in a corner, eyes swollen nearly shut, pulling tiny pieces of twine through his tunic with a bamboo needle.

Piece by piece, and stitch by stitch, he was turning the inside of his black pajama shirt, red, white and blue.

Mike Christian paid the price for loving his flag and for loving his country. He left his youth, his health, and much of his soul and sanity in Vietnam. After six unimaginably cruel years, he was sent home. He tragically died in a house fire just a decade after his release. He is now an often-recalled figure in American Flag history.

A flag is only as good as the people it represents. And for that, America is richly blessed. We must continue to fly the flag proudly and as we gaze upon that beautiful banner of stars and stripes, remember those who have fought to defend it.

Thank you, God Bless America and God Bless our flag.

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