



THE AMERICAN LEGION

Veterans Strengthening America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Suggested Remarks for Memorial Day 2023

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Fellow Americans,

We do not forget. Whether it's an hour ago or a century ago, we remember. Just ask the families of Angus Nelson MacLean and James Frost. These two Coast Guard heroes were aboard the cutter *Tampa*, as it escorted merchant steamers between allied ports during World War I. Sunk by a German U-boat in 1918, 111 Coast Guardsmen and four Navy sailors lost their lives.

A flaw in the awards criteria did not permit Coast Guard veterans from receiving Purple Hearts for actions that occurred before World War II. This injustice has been corrected and just this year the families of Fireman MacLean and First Lieutenant Frost finally received the medals earned long ago by their heroic ancestors. The Coast Guard continues to identify families whose ancestors still have not received the medals that they have earned.

It is just another example of our country honoring ALL of our fallen heroes, regardless of how many decades or centuries have passed.

Pascal Poolaw, a member of the Kiowa (*rhymes with Iowa*) Nation enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Silver Star while serving with the Fourth Infantry Division in Belgium, but his story didn't end there. He was awarded two more Silver Stars and a battlefield commission for his actions in Korea.

In 1962 Lieutenant Poolaw retired after a successful twenty-year Army career. When his three sons went off to Vietnam, Poolaw felt compelled to once again enlist a few years after his military retirement. He sacrificed his commission to serve as a senior NCO in combat.

On November 7, 1967, Poolaw led a squad that was ambushed during Operation Shenandoah II in Loc Ninh. Hit by fire, he attempted to pull one of his wounded soldiers to safety, before succumbing to his own wounds.

First Sergeant Pascal Poolaw, a veteran of three wars, was posthumously awarded his fourth Silver Star and third Purple Heart.

We are here today for heroes like Pascal Poolaw, people who have given all that they can give so that others can enjoy freedom.

The American Legion Family has a special obligation to honor and remember First Sergeant Poolaw and all of our country's fallen heroes. We were founded in the aftermath of World War I, which claimed the lives of more than 116,000 Americans.

We honor the heroes of all wars, not just on Memorial Day, but through our daily commitment to ensure that America remains a place worthy of such sacrifice.

We honor these heroes by supporting those who are currently serving in our armed forces. Whether at a domestic base or in a combat zone, military service comes with inherent dangers. On March 29th, nine young soldiers with the Army's 101st Airborne Division lost their lives when two Black Hawk helicopters crashed near Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Their commander, Major General J.P. McGee said their sacrifice, "will reverberate through our formations for years to come."

It is felt here as well. And you can rest assured, it will always be painfully felt by the Gold Star families who will mourn them for the rest of their lives.

Rosanna Powers is a Marine Corps veteran. On August 17, 2004, her brother, Lance Corporal Caleb Powers lost his life in Iraq. The very next day Rosanna's fiancé, Marine Sergeant Richard Lord, was also killed there.

In a Fox News commentary Rosanna wrote, “We can debate the war’s legacy and what it means for the future of American foreign policy. But remember who stands ready to protect our freedom to have those debates and remember those who died to keep that freedom safe. It’s up to us to honor them, in our own way, by trying to make the country they died for a better place.” Unquote.

When politicians debate the cost of veterans benefits, we should remember the price already paid not just by the fallen heroes but by veterans and family members like Rosanna Powers. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the true cost of war.

The men and women who died for our freedom represent the diverse patchwork that is the United States of America. They were rich and poor; Black and white; male and female. They were from cities, farms and suburbs. They came from every ethnicity, background and political spectrum. In short, they looked like anyone of us.

Their one common characteristic is that they all took an oath to die for America if called upon.

We can ensure that the memories of these heroes and their sacrifices are not in vain. We can ensure that future generations understand the importance of service, sacrifice, and honor. We can ensure through our own community service that our country remains strong, free and prosperous.

Memorial Day is a time that many wear or proudly display poppies, not as symbols of what was lost, but as reminders of living legacies.

As we gather here today, we are reminded of the words of President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Quote: "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Unquote.

Today, we are the living, and we are dedicated to continuing the work of those who have gone before us.

We are dedicated to preserving the memory of our fallen heroes and declare our unending gratitude and support for their families.

So let us take this time to remember and honor the men and women who have given their lives for this great country. Let us reflect on their courage, their sacrifice and their dedication to a cause greater than themselves. And let us recommit ourselves to the cause of freedom, justice and democracy, so that the legacy of our fallen heroes will live on for generations to come.

We continue to mourn their loss, but most of all, we celebrate their lives.

Thank you, God bless America and God bless those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.