

Memorial Day 2017 Suggested Remarks

(Express gratitude for the opportunity to speak and acknowledge VIPs, Distinguished guests, officers, members of the Auxiliary, Sons, Juniors, and other notables present.)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for being here with us today to observe and commemorate our country's most solemn national day of remembrance – Memorial Day. Today, we honor the men and women of our military who have made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives in service to our country.

And while we honor them with parades, ceremonies and public gatherings, it is also appropriate that we remember those among us here and throughout the country for whom the loss of each of these men and women is so personally felt – the Gold Star families of all generations to whom each of the fallen was a husband or wife, mother or father, sister or brother, daughter or son.

Memorial Day is one of our nation's oldest holidays, born not from an official declaration – something that came much later – but rather from the grass-roots sense of respect and honor for the fallen that began compelling Americans to decorate Civil War graves with newly bloomed Spring flowers back in 1866, and still brings us all together here today.

This beautiful day we share with each other in peace has been purchased for us by some of the most noble, selfless and brave men and women our country has ever produced, from those who gave their lives to defend our great nation, all the way back to those who gave their lives to establish it in the first place. It is important today that we not only mourn the deaths and honor the lives of each fallen Soldier, Sailor, Airmen, Marine and Coastguardsman, but that we also have an appropriate appreciation for the scope of lives lost in battle over our nation's history.

Ten thousand Americans laid down there lives in the conflicts that established our country many years before more than 200 thousand laid down their lives in the conflict that threatened to tear it apart. There were 50 thousand battle deaths in World War I, another 290 thousand in World War II, 33 thousand in Korea, 47 thousand in Vietnam, and through Desert Storm and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a total of nearly 700 thousand American men an woman have fought and died in service to our country.

Our nation owes a debt to its fallen heroes that we can never fully repay. It is our responsibility, our duty, and even our privilege to honor their sacrifice. We must honor them in our own lives by keeping them and their memories close to our hearts and allowing their character and selflessness to guide our own sense of patriotism and duty to own fellow Americans. As a nation, we must honor them by keeping the sacred trust with all the men and women who have served in uniform

and are currently serving now, as well as their families; by never giving up the search for those who still haven't returned home, and by keeping the spirit of this Memorial Day with us every day, all year around.