

## **A Tribute to Our Servicemen On this Memorial Day**

On this Memorial Day, we will gather again, as we faithfully do every year, to pay tribute to the men and women who fell in the line of duty, to preserve the freedom upon which America was founded and which we have carried on for more than 200 years.

“To Those Who Serve”:

We walk for those who no longer walk.  
We speak for those whose voices are stilled.  
We remember those with memories lost,  
And we honor those who fell.  
The soldiers off in foreign land,  
The sailors on foreign seas.  
The Marines who died in hand to hand,  
So we might all be free.  
The airmen who on lofty skies,  
Flew bravely into war.  
The men who stayed to watch our shore.  
To these brave men and women,  
Give honor justly due.  
Their ultimate sacrifice,  
Guarantees freedom for me and you.

All across America, our grateful nation comes together to honor these men and women — some celebrated, others quite unknown, but each a patriot and a hero. More than 700,000 Americans in uniform have fallen in combat during the 231-year history of our nation. These brave Americans exemplified American values under the harshest of conditions.

Those we honor today were not strangers; they were our neighbors from cities and villages across Wisconsin. They walked the streets of our towns, taught in our schools, worked next to our parents; they were our fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. They answered the call to protect the freedoms we hold so dear.

For many of our school children, today may seem little more than a day off from school or a welcome start to the summer. For the last several days, families across Wisconsin have been thinking about what the weather will be like for the weekend, and when they can get away. But I do ask you to remember those children across

Wisconsin and the rest of the nation who know the sacrifices of war first-hand, whose parents went to Afghanistan and Iraq —to never return, and the Iraqi families who have been disrupted by sectarian violence. The price of freedom is not free.

This is what this day of commemoration is all about. Initially established after the Civil War to honor the dead and the commitment of those who serviced on both sides in that conflict. Memorial Day has since become the day on which we annually remember the sacrifice of all who have perished in service to our country. So, take the time to relax, but also take the time to think why it is called Memorial Day, and why you have that time off to be with each other.

On this day, there are essential lessons for you and indeed for all the rest of us as well: Appreciate the blessings of freedom, recognize the power and virtue of sacrifice, and respect those who gave everything on behalf of our common good. It reminds us of our obligation to take care of those who have taken care of us, and those who take care of us today. That means ensuring our men and women in uniform have the best training, equipment and preparation possible to do their jobs for freedom, and if they come back broken, we as a nation need to take care of them. The price of freedom is not free.

One of the earliest recipients of the Medal of Honor, the Civil War Hero, General Joshua Chamberlain, said, “The inspiration of a noble cause involving human interests far and wide, enables men and women to do things they did not dream themselves capable of before and which they were not capable of alone. The consciousness of belonging, vitally, to something beyond individuality, of part of a personality that reaches we know not where, in space and in time, greatens the hearts to the limits of the soul’s ideal.”

We honor the heroes who stand among us and those living across the nation, who, in their defining hours, were not blind to fears but rather strong enough to see through them, who reached deep within for the resolve to achieve what even they may have considered impossible. We honor the heroes now departed, who carried into battle the light of true friendships and fidelity to their nation, but who broke and bled into a blackness from which they never returned. But if we are to keep faith with those who served and sacrificed, we must do more than revel in their gallantry and epic daring. We must also grant them the simple dignity of being remembered in their true dimensions, as they regarded themselves and were viewed by those around them: as a child, raised by a mother and father, a young person, a student, or a neighbor, an occasional confidante or a friend for life.

America is eternally indebted to the families and friends of our servicemen and women who stood, and continue to stand, behind each of these heroes. It is never too late for us, individually and collectively, to say we recognize your loss, we respect your sacrifice, and we thank you. The greatest honor we can pay to those who have fought for America is to rededicate ourselves to the principles for which America stands, to ensure that those who have suffered and died shall have not done so in vain.

May God Bless the United States and all the American heroes we honor today. And may He bless as well those who still stand at the ready and may He give us the wisdom to do what is right for tomorrow. Enjoy your freedom, it has been paid for.