

Memorial Day 2019

(Greetings)

In quiet services across our country today, we come together as a nation to remember those lost in the clash of battle; the thunder of bombs, the roar of tanks, the rumbling of airplanes flying overhead and the scream of artillery shells. This Memorial Day, we come together to appreciate the freedom that we enjoy today as we honor the sacrifices that paid for it.

As we enjoy living in the land of the free, and the home of the brave, we must continue to remind Americans that

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there is no freedom without bravery, and those we honor today were brave when it counted the most.

Amid the war-torn decades we've endured, we can take great pride in these heroes ... these men and women who believe they were just doing their duty. They had strength when the situation demanded it; determination when everything felt lost; and devotion, courage and patriotism when others looked to them for guidance. No one ordered them to practice the most basic of human ideals ... they did it because they were Americans and because we live in a nation worth defending.

Generation after generation, our nation has been lucky enough to have service members who continue to believe

that freedom is worth fighting for and, if necessary, dying for.

In cemeteries across America and around the world today, people will pause to spread flowers on the graves of those lost in war. But today ... Memorial Day ... isn't about the number killed, it's not about the sorrow we feel at their loss, and it's not about mourning; what it is about was best expressed by General George S. Patton back in 1944 at a military cemetery in France. Looking out across a field filled with rows of crosses marking the graves of men who, just days before, had been part of his Army, Patton said, "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died ... rather we should thank God that such men lived."

And that is what this very special day is all about, to be thankful that such brave men and women have lived, and to pay tribute to those heroic patriots who bravely rose up and fought for something greater than themselves, protecting a home to which they never returned. They sacrificed everything for the noblest of causes, and it is up to you and me to carry their memory forward in an effort to repay a debt that can never truly be repaid.

Flowers, memorials and flags at half-staff, and the sad notes of TAPS, as meaningful as they are, they are not enough. What we really must do to honor their sacrifice is to live what they died for.

Live the America they died for ... a country of freedom, equality, opportunity and unlimited promise.

Live filled with hope ... hope that what they gave us will last forever, and that freedom and opportunity will find all who seek it.

Live to preserve their legacy ... educating all who believe Memorial Day is just another holiday, and passing along our knowledge to the next generation so they may do the same. We must ensure that the youth of tomorrow understand the true cost of freedom.

In meeting here today, we do more than just carry on a tradition dating back to 1866, when the first formal Memorial Day observances were conducted. In meeting here, we go beyond tradition, beyond remembering and beyond mourning; today, we work together to make this the

country they died for – building a better nation each and every day.

They gave up their todays for our tomorrows, and now we must carry their message of dedication and determination to the generation in uniform today, and to the generations who will serve tomorrow because there is no greater way to honor the memory of those who have secured it.

-VFW-