

Good morning/afternoon, I'm NAME, POSITION WITH DAV.

Before I begin, I'd like to RECOGNIZE ANY SPECIAL GUESTS.

Thank you for being with us today.

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Today, we celebrate Independence Day—America's birthday—the Fourth of July. For many Americans, the day is filled with gatherings of family and friends, cookouts, an assortment of firework displays and a well-deserved day off. The importance of the holiday is not in the celebrations we hold but in recognizing the significance of our nation's founding and ideals.

The 13 colonies were already engaged in open conflict with England for well over a year when, in the summer of 1776, the Continental Congress was convened in Philadelphia. Our Founding Fathers were military leaders, rebels and politicians who varied in their personalities, social statuses and backgrounds. Still, they came together to forge a framework for a young democracy through the Declaration of Independence.

America's origin is often portrayed as a smooth transition from independent colonies to the United States. However, that was not the case. Our Founding Fathers were uncertain about managing our budding nation and openly questioned one another's leadership. The debates were more divisive than we care to recollect, and many at the time thought the American experiment would fail.

But due to the unyielding spirit of the first American patriots, they overcame their differences and a powerful call for freedom was answered. Thanks to the courage of the troops who served in Washington's army, willing to die for their freedom and that of their families and neighbors, we can now celebrate their sacrifices on this day.

That sense of duty, honor and country became engrained in the mindset of American patriots throughout the generations. It was on display on the battlefields and in the trenches of Europe in World War I, on the islands of the Pacific in World War II, the hills of Korea, the jungles of Vietnam, the mountains of Afghanistan, the deserts of Iraq and Syria and throughout all conflicts, operations and military service to our nation.

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Today's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Space Force Guardians continue to honor our forefathers and the generations of veterans before them. By volunteering to serve and demonstrating a willingness to stand up and face the enemy, they ensure freedom lives on.

As a nation, we must remind ourselves of the future they fought for and do our best to live up to those values. It is up to us to use the gifts secured by those who have served, to do as much good as possible and keep our promise to them by ensuring they get the care they earned.

There are so many ways you can touch the lives of veterans and their families, but one of the best is to get involved by volunteering with DAV. You can sign up to drive veterans to medical appointments, spend time visiting patients in VA hospitals nationwide, or help veterans and their families with numerous other activities outside a VA facility.

Our volunteers are the face—and heart—of DAV, and a beacon of hope for those who need it the most. Their devotion and dedication to the veteran community are truly inspiring.

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Whether you have an hour or can volunteer full time, consider giving back to veterans by donating your most precious resource—your time. For more details on getting involved, please check out “Volunteer-for-Veterans-dot-org.”

I’ll wrap up with some fitting words from General George Washington, which are inscribed on the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C.:

“To that meritorious class of veteran, non-commissioned officers and privates, who have been discharged for inability ... nothing should be a more melancholy sight, than to behold those who have shed their blood or lost their limbs in service of their country.”

Today, we honor the memory of those who boldly declared independence in 1776 by living our best lives. Thank you all for coming out and thank you to all who continue to show the bravery and selflessness required to ensure that freedom endures.

Thank you for making the recognition and sacrifices of veterans a part of your holiday. Be safe, and Happy Independence Day, everyone!

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