

**VETERANS DAY
2014**



(Acknowledgment of introduction, distinguished guests, officers and members of the DAV and Auxiliary, and others who are present.)

All gave some, some gave all. This is a truth we veterans know above all others, as it remains with us for a lifetime.

By being here today and taking time to reflect on the service and sacrifice of veterans, you demonstrate that this is much more than a catchy, patriotic phrase. It illustrates that you understand, whether through your own service or through the service of others, the truth veterans know all too well: no one leaves the military unchanged.

For some, there are physical injuries that drastically changed life as they knew it in the blink of an eye. For others, the wounds may be invisible, but the pain is very real. It isn't an easy journey for our brave men and women as they work to overcome the challenges they face as a result of their service. But our veterans have never sought out the easy path.

Service before self: three words that define every person here today who has worn the uniform of our great nation. Each one of you has sacrificed, and I would like to thank you, from one veteran to another, for that solemn commitment.

A grateful nation would like to thank you for your service, as well.

As of last month, there is finally a place of honor within our nation's capital where our nation's wounded, injured and ill veterans are recognized for the full weight of their sacrifices to this country.

Our fellow citizens, veterans, their families and survivors have much to celebrate this year. This very fall, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated.

DAV, along with our brothers and sisters from many patriotic organizations, was committed to making this memorial a reality and ensuring that there would be a visible reminder of the price of the nation's freedom.

This monument serves to honor those sacrifices, for all those forever affected by service.

Strategically placed within view of the United States Capitol so that lawmakers have a daily reminder of the cost of war, the memorial is a union of granite walls, glass panels and bronze statues, conveying a combination of strength and vulnerability, loss and renewal.

The stone is etched with words that artfully articulate what it means to serve and to sacrifice. One especially powerful inscription is from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, spoken on February 10, 1946, to a group of ill and injured veterans:

"Each one of you bears upon his body the permanent, honorable scars of dangerous service: service rendered in order that our great nation might continue to live according to the expressed will of its own citizens."

The future president went on to say that while he hated war and its devastating price, he would not soon forget the greatest traits of humankind that shone through the darkest parts of combat—qualities that carried the once unlikely underdog to victory in both the Pacific and the Atlantic.

“We still cannot forget those ennobling traits of human character, which alone can carry men forward to victory when war is thrust upon us,” said General Eisenhower.

“Courage, devotion, drive, sacrifice, discipline, optimism, mutual help, loyalty. Together, they mean effective teamwork.”

Indeed, what makes the United States military effective is not one soldier, sailor, Marine, airman or Coast Guardsman. It is the sum of the whole that drives victory. It is knowing that in the darkest hour, the man to your left and the woman to your right each have your back, and you have theirs.

The unmatched dedication of veterans for their fellow veterans is why I am humbled to be a part of DAV. Throughout the years, warfare has changed, the size and scope of our military has evolved and the global presence continues to shift.

But our commitment to our nation's heroes – heroes of all eras – has never wavered.

As many of you know, during the transition from service member to civilian, it often feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders, but there is no reason for veterans to bear that burden alone.

That is why we are here today. To reconfirm our commitment to the promises we made when we asked our fellow citizens to serve. We will not leave our wounded behind. We recognize what they did for us.

General Eisenhower explained what he believed it meant to be an ill or injured veteran. He affirmed there should be pride – not shame – in the sacrifices that impacted each and every veteran he addressed.

“You have thus demonstrated certain essential qualifications of leadership, including self-reliance, optimism and definite refusal to admit defeat.”

General Eisenhower may have uttered those words nearly 70 years ago, but they remain relevant today. The men and women DAV serve refuse to give up. Each and every one of them embodies the eight tenets General Eisenhower outlined: courage, devotion, drive, sacrifice, discipline, optimism, mutual help and loyalty.

It is their commitment to teamwork, excellence, and, above all, service that allows us to be here now, reflecting upon our freedom. I am honored to salute the men and women who made this ceremony possible.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak today, and for joining me in honoring the men and women who served.

May God bless each of you, all our nation's veterans, and may God bless the United States of America.

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