

## **Suggested Remarks for**

### **Memorial Day 2016**

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

Thank you for being here today. It's an honor to stand in front of you and speak about something I hold so dearly: remembering the sacrifices of our nation's heroes.

These days, you see a lot of “don’t just barbeque” or “Memorial Day isn’t just a day off!” While that’s true, I don’t want to beat you over the head with it. Enjoy your day. Enjoy the extra time spent with family and friends. Enjoy your backyard barbeque or however you decide to spend it. But I ask you this: Please don’t forget **WHY** you get it.

This is why we—the many—gather here to honor our veterans—the few who were so willing to give of themselves to defend their brothers and sisters, and their country.

But there is a difference about today. Memorial Day isn't just about honoring veterans; it’s honoring those who lost their lives. Veterans had the ability to come home.

Memorial Day is a day we as the country come together to honor and remember our servicemen and women who answered America's call to service and paid the ultimate price. Memorial Day is the time for Americans as one body to stand up and say, "Thank you. We remember you. We are grateful to you."

We remember our fallen.

We remember Marine Sergeant Justin Noyes (No-ize) from Oklahoma, who came home from high school one day and told his mom he'd joined the Marines.

He told her he wanted to make a difference.

He signed up to be a demolitions expert and deployed with the Explosives Ordnance Company, 1st Marine Logistics Group, of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Forward at Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

As a newlywed on his second deployment, one month shy of his 24th birthday, Justin was disarming one roadside bomb when an unseen second bomb was detonated. He lost his life that day.

We remember. Thank you, Sergeant Noyes.

We honor their loved ones. Mothers. Fathers. Sisters. Brothers. Sons. Daughters. Friends. Every year, families of the fallen are joined together and bound by loss in a way most of us can't even imagine. But military families are something special, aren't they?

Bereaved parents often become isolated after a tragic loss. Friends don't know what to say about a grief no words can touch. We don't have a word for a parent who has lost a child; Webster's or Oxford can't define it. So, these mothers and fathers of our military fallen call themselves "Gold Star" parents, based in the tradition of the service flag that hung in homes during the World Wars. Each blue star on the banner stood for a loved one overseas. Gold honored those never coming home.

We remember. And we thank you for your sacrifice.

It's daunting, I know. When we think of the tremendous sacrifices survivors and veterans have made, physically and emotionally, how can we possibly say thanks?

The best way to thank them is to honor their fallen, to care for their wounded brothers and sisters, and to safeguard their families.

Our men and women who serve are an extraordinarily selfless group. They fight as a team and as a family, and they look out for one another to their last dying breaths. Trust me when I say that there is no better way to thank a veteran than to protect their brethren.

This has been the DAV mission for nearly a century. We are proud to continue this mission today.

What could possibly be good enough to say that would convey how truly grateful we are someone like them had the courage to do what so many others could not and would not?

There are no words. But there are actions.

Take the time, not just for Memorial Day but every day, and take a moment to say thank you to our fallen. For those who never left the battlefields, we must hold them up in our hometowns and honor their memories.

Say thank you to Sergeant Noyes and the many like him. Say thank you to our Gold Star families, and ask them to tell you about their loved one, if they wish.

We should spend time reflecting on their service and sacrifice, and live in gratitude each and every day for the precious gift they have given to us.

As a nation, we made a promise—a promise that must be kept. To honor our fallen, we must keep that promise.

We keep those promises by strengthening the programs and services that our injured and ill veterans rely on. We must ensure they and their caregivers are properly supported.

We thank our veterans by fighting for them when they can't. by ensuring they and their survivors get the care they earned when they wrote a blank check made payable "up to, and including, their very lives."

So please, spend some extra time with your loved ones. Step back from the daily stresses and reflect on your freedoms that so many of our sons and daughters died to protect. I'm not asking you not to have a barbeque. I'm asking you to remember why you have the luxury and freedom we enjoy today.



Thank you, and may God bless and keep our fallen, our veterans and active military, and the United States of America.

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