

Dec 17, 2022

Official National Wreaths Across America Day Ceremony

Opening at 12:00 noon Eastern Standard Time

Good afternoon. Ladies and Gentlemen please join with me in a moment of silence to remember the fallen, the prisoners of war, the missing in action and honor those who have served and are serving this great nation's armed services.
:30 - :60 seconds of silence recommended

Color Guard:

Please stand while we post the colors.

"Color Guard, post the Colors." (*Where Honor Guards are present and participating, they too will come forward and place themselves on both sides of the memorial to be decorated*). **Location Coordinator to set this up in advance.**

Opening Remarks:

Thank you all for joining us here today. Right now, across the country at more than 1,100 memorial sites like this one we are gathered as one nation to Remember, Honor and Teach. We are all proud to be Americans that live in a free society made up of many people, from many walks of life. The freedoms we enjoy today have not come without a price. Lying here before us and in cemeteries throughout this nation are men and women who gave their lives so that we can live in freedom and without fear. We can worship as we see fit. We can raise our children to believe as we do. We can travel from one end of this great nation to the other and not have to ask permission to go. We are free to vote for whomever we feel should be in government office, with no explanation needed. We have the right to succeed and we have the right to fail at whatever endeavor we wish to pursue.

The United States of America was founded on the ideals of Freedom, Justice and Equality. Our Nation stands as a shining beacon of liberty and freedom to the world. We thank those who gave their lives to keep us free and we shall not forget you. We shall remember. (Short Pause)

Today, many of you here, are Veterans of wars and conflicts that America has had to fight to protect the innocent and oppressed. This nation has always been the first to stand up for the freedom of people from around the world. Many of you here today have answered that call and served your country well. We are here today to say "Thank you" and we are honored to know you.

There are many men and women serving today in all branches of the military, here at home and in places far away that most of us have never heard of. These men and women are part of the best-trained, best-equipped force in the world. We honor them and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to keep our country safe from terrorism, hatred and injustice.

Quoting our 40th United States President Ronald Reagan. Quote "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free." End Quote.

Today, we show a united front of gratitude and respect across the United States of America as we REMEMBER the Fallen, HONOR those who serve and TEACH our children the value of freedom.

Wreath Laying: Color Guard and if present Honor Guard will present arms at the laying of each wreath.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Army.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Marine Corps.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Navy.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Air force.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Coast Guard.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Merchant Marines.

Now (Person's Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in honor of the 93,129 United States Servicemen from all branches of the service who last know status was either Prisoners of War or Missing in Action. These individuals have never returned to their families and homes. We shall not forget you.

Note: If at all possible, an active duty service person should lay the wreath of the armed services they represent. After the last wreath is laid the Color Guard and Honor Guard will Order Arms.

Closing Remarks:

We encourage every volunteer here today who places a wreath on a veteran's grave to say that veteran's name aloud and take a moment to thank them for their service to our country. It's a small act that goes a long way toward keeping the memory of our veterans alive.

Remember, we are not here today to "decorate graves." We are here to remember not their *deaths*, but their *lives*. Each wreath is a gift of appreciation, from a grateful America.

These live balsam wreaths symbolize our honor to those who have served and are serving in the armed forces of our great nation and to their families who endure sacrifices everyday on our behalf. To our children, we want you to understand the freedoms you enjoy today have not been free but have come with a cost that someday, you may have to pay yourself.

As a nation standing together, we can defeat terrorism, hatred and injustice. Thanks to our Veterans, we have the freedom to do just that.

This is where the scripted ceremony ends and the Leader or other Designated person turns it over to the Veterans Groups.

Tips:

Where there are high-ranking officials present (Governor, State Elected Officials, etc) and who wish to make a statement (short) this is a good time to let them speak

Veterans' Groups: Leaders, make sure you accommodate all groups that want to participate in the ceremony after the scripted ceremony. Try to lead them to keep it short and to the point.

Ending: At the conclusion, where possible, Have TAPS Played. Retire the Colors and thank everyone for coming.

Location Coordinators: As Coordinators, you are in charge of everything else that takes place at this memorial event. How your Color Guard is placed and/or Honor Guard is placed is entirely up to you. Memorials through out the country are all different and we cannot script nor do we want to script the entire ceremony. You are capable and a better judge of your command than we are. We will support you with ideas, if asked to provide them, to you or your other leaders in your group. Have fun with this project.

Additional Ideas: Before the beginning of the ceremony some groups have the participants recite the Pledge of Allegiance and play the National Anthem. This is your choice to do if desired.

If you have families there that want to place wreaths on their loved one's grave you can either flag the grave ahead of time or have some of the local groups get involved by standing by the headstone to make sure no one else places the wreath other than the family member. (All this would need to be coordinated prior to the service and they would need to pre-register with whoever is organizing.)