

On Veterans Day, day we recognize and honor all veterans from every generation who have served in the Armed Forces of the greatest nation on earth.

The 52 flags that are before us represent Veterans who continue to inspire us today. Within this field, there are flags for veterans who served in the major wars and conflicts our Nation has been in. Hollis Unite Keith, a World War I veteran and his father Unite Keith, a Civil War Veteran are out here. Bill Kinney, who I was told became a paratrooper and jumped out of perfectly good planes because they paid an extra \$50 per month. Past Legion commanders are out here. Howard Callihan is out here. Flag #1. Don and Myrtle Sisco are out here. Their love for their country, the Legion and each other endures. Charles F Powell Jr. a Marine Corps private who was KIA at the Battle of Iwo Jima is out here. As is my grand father, Major Michael Valerio.

In times of peace and in times of war, our veterans have exemplified the values of honor, courage and commitment. They have displayed unwavering dedication to their fellow

servicemembers, their brothers- and sisters -in arms. Their love for country is proven.

But Veterans Day is not just a day of celebration and remembrance. It is a day of action. It is a day when we must recommit ourselves to the well-being of veterans and their families.

Most Americans profess to truly love our veterans, especially at gatherings like this on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

And while their feelings are sincere, it is important to remember that veterans are defending us 365 days a year. The heroism that has been demonstrated time and again by veterans from the American Revolution to the Global War on Terrorism is sometimes unnoticed by many who enjoy the security that their sacrifice has provided.

Not all veterans have seen combat, but **all** have at one time made the solemn promise to sacrifice their lives for this country if called upon. Without the formidable strength that veterans have

demonstrated in war, Americans would never enjoy their daily freedoms.

It was none other than George Washington who said, - quote-
“To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving the peace.” – unquote.

For many veterans, our nation was important enough to endure long separations from their families, miss the births of their children, freeze in sub-zero temperatures, roast in faraway deserts, lose limbs, and, far too often, lose their lives.

Their families serve and sacrifice as well.

Military spouses have had to endure career interruptions, frequent changes of address, and a disproportionate share of parental responsibilities.

The children often had to deal with changes in schools, separation from friends and, hardest of all, the uncertainty of whether or not Mom or Dad will live through their next combat tour.

You cannot fight a war without veterans and while the utopian idea of a society without war is appealing, let us not forget

that wars have liberated slaves, stopped genocide and toppled terrorists.

It has often been said that without our veterans, Americans would be speaking Russian, German or, perhaps, Japanese. Regardless of which view of alternative history you take, we do know that without our veterans, America would not be America.

In this era of uncertainty and division, it is our veterans who serve as a unifying force. They come from all walks of life, representing the rich tapestry of our nation. Yet, when they put on the uniform, they become an even greater power – the embodiment of the American spirit.

Our debt to these heroes can never be re-paid but our gratitude and respect must last forever.

Today also marks the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Soldiers Monument in Jeffersonville. \$2500 was secured from the town's war chest for this project. Harvey Varnum took the lead and had skilled workmen from the quarries of Barre blast, cut and drill into the massive rock. On November 11, 1923, the completed

Memorial was presented to the town with a bronze tablet with the names of Cambridge residents who served.

100 years of moss growth, dirt grime and weathering has recently been washed away. Cracks and damage has been patched. Thanks to the generous donations we have received, the Soldiers Monument has been cleaned and restored. Cambridge remembers.

Please take some time to walk among these flags and visit the Soldiers Monument talk with neighbors and local residents you may not know. Introduce yourself and tell stories of the Veterans in this field.

Thank you for being here. God bless America.

I present to you, our guest speaker, 1st Lieutenant Jillian Stein