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Veterans Day Speech 2016

Good morning ladies and gentleman. We have gathered this morning to honor the brave men and women who have served our country throughout times of war and times of peace. It is because of their sacrifice that we are able to hold this ceremony this morning. It is because of their sacrifice that we are able to live in a country where we can conduct our day to day lives without inherently fearing for our safety. We thank our veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen, and reservists for your sacrifices for our country.

Allow me to identify the uniform both I and and color guard are wearing. We are not veterans and in no way do we wear this uniform to pretend as much. Our uniform is that of the Civil Air Patrol, an auxiliary of the United States Air Force. The Civil Air Patrol is a civilian volunteer national/community service organization composed of cadets and senior members. Senior Members consist of Veterans and non-veteran adults who nurture the cadets whose ages range from 12 to 21 years. Cadets learn Core Values of Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence and Respect. We are

honored to be here today to pay tribute to all veterans past and present, near and far. We look up to our Veterans who have sacrificed in service to our Nation so we can have the National Freedom we have, a freedom that is not a free gift but comes with a cost and at times the sacrifice of one's own life.

Allow me to share with you the origin of Veterans Day. Many people don't know that Veterans Day, November 11, was not a day just drawn out of hat and dedicated to thanking our veterans. Originally known as Armistice day, November 11 was the day that the fighting of World War I ceased. For years, Armistice Day was celebrated, until it was deemed appropriate to change the name. On June 1, 1954, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day, hence giving us the day we honor now. However, we do not need a special day of the year to dedicate to honoring our veterans. Each and every day of our lives, we should be thanking and honoring our veterans for the sacrifices they made to protect our country.

This year, we observed the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attack, and in less than a month, the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, a day that has truly lived in infamy. Thousands of American people lost their lives on these two tragic days, both civilian and military. This is why we fight. This is why brave men and women put themselves in harm's

way every hour of every day. This is why we honor those who have made so many sacrifices for us and for our country. We fight because it is not the nature of the American people to accept such atrocities.

Pearl Harbor is still a sacred location for many Americans. The remnants of the USS Arizona still lay strewn across the bay, and oil still floats to the surface of the water from the Arizona's watery grave. If you've ever seen the USS Arizona memorial, you know how unique the shape is. It resembles a bridge where the center dips down below the edges. This is a metaphor for the war triggered by the bombing, and the spirit of our American heroes. While it sags in the center, the edges remain strong and steadfast. We reeled from the defeat in the beginning of the war, but remained steadfast throughout the years of fighting and were ultimately victorious.

We do not tolerate attacks on our home soil, especially attacks that leave us reeling and with so much devastation. Americans truly exemplify the "warrior ethos:"

"I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.”

It is because of this mindset that the United States Military is one of the most feared militaries in the world. The brave men and women who have fought and are currently fighting for our country never gave up on us, so we should never give up on them.

For some veterans, there are physical scars that remind them of the horrors of war. For others, the scars are not as visible. However, for both, the pain is just as real and tangible. To take the easy path would have spared our veterans from the trauma of war, but it is not the American way to take the easy path. Throughout World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the war on Terror in Southwest Asia, our veterans have not taken the easy route. Rather, they have taken the path to our freedom, the path to ensure that our great nation is safe. All gave some, and some gave all. This statement is known to be true, especially by the veterans in our midst today. For them, it was not just a war. For them, it was not just another day at the office. For them, it was the possibility of waking up in the morning and not knowing if you were going to see the sunset that night, or sunrise the next morning. For them, it was the possibility that their family might never see them again. Our veterans knew the risks, yet they still chose to fight for

freedom. They chose to make sacrifices in the name of freedom and justice.

There is no higher honor in this nation than to be called a veteran.

The United States' policy of isolationism was nullified following the Bombing of Pearl Harbor. When the United States entered World War II, men and women alike answered the call and boldly fought for America. For the 4 years the United States was involved in World War II, men and women made sacrifices both at home and abroad. 418,500 Americans, both civilian and military, were killed during World War II. After World War II, the United States aimed to stop the spread of communism. Thus, the Korean and Vietnam Wars were fought. In both Korea and Vietnam, airpower was crucial in fighting, whether it was to assist Marine and Army soldiers on the ground, or battling Air Forces and Naval Aviators. The use of Helicopters in Vietnam changed the way we fought. Helicopters not only brought supplies and support much faster, it also transported our fighting men into battle. In Vietnam the devastation of war was seen from home through television for the first time. Following the introduction of the television, the support for foreign wars plummeted. This is one of the reasons that made the Vietnam War one of the most unpopular wars in American History. It was the first war where people at home could actually see the brute destruction

and casualties. Support for the war plummeted. 58,000 Americans were killed in the Vietnam War. They may be gone, but they will never be forgotten. Their efforts and unwavering dedication to their nation are a sacrifice worthy of our support and appreciation.

Many Americans remain oblivious to the fighting that is still taking place in Southwest Asia. The United States was jump started into fighting following the 9/11 terror attack. The war on terror marked the first major military action in which the US was involved in many years. The war in Afghanistan was the longest war in the history of the United States. The United States threw all their effort into the War in Southwest Asia to defend this great nation, and to avenge those who lost their lives in the attack on the World Trade Center. The war on terror was, and is, a war fought by many countries across the world. At its peak, there were over 100,000 American troops fighting against terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, we are still engaged in Southwest Asia against ISIS.

As Americans, we have been fortunate not to be subject to the war front in our country. The devastation in countries suffering from wars on their soil is catastrophic. In events like 9/11 and Pearl Harbor, that devastation is brought home to America. It is because of our service men and

women who defend our country today that there are not more attacks on our soil. Our military might keep our country strong.

I'd like to read you a poem written by an Army Ranger, Sgt. Joshua Helterbran. Sgt. Helterbran entered military service in September of 1996. From then, he served in various Army units until he was injured. He is now in Fort Still, OK recovering. His poem is entitled *Final Inspection*:

The soldier stood and faced God,  
Which must always come to pass,  
He hoped his shoes were shining,  
Just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now, you soldier,  
How shall I deal with you?  
Have you always turned the other cheek?  
To My Church have you been true?"

The soldier squared his shoulders and  
said, "No, Lord, I guess I ain't,  
Because those of us who carry guns,  
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,  
And at times my talk was tough,  
And sometimes I've been violent,  
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny  
That wasn't mine to keep...

Though I worked a lot of overtime  
When the bills got just too steep,

And I never passed a cry for help,  
Though at times I shook with fear,  
And sometimes, God forgive me,  
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place  
Among the people here,  
They never wanted me around,  
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,  
It needn't be so grand,  
I never expected or had too much,  
But if you don't, I'll understand."

There was a silence all around the throne,  
Where the saints had often trod,  
As the soldier waited quietly,  
For the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you soldier,  
You've borne your burdens well,  
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,  
You've done your time in Hell."

In closing, nobody knows history as well as those who lived it, and those who fought to shape it. We owe these men and women our respect and gratitude for the tremendous sacrifices they made. Whether they be Airmen,

Seamen, Soldiers, Marines, or Coast Guardsmen, this Veterans Day, when you see anyone who served either now, or in the past, take some time out of your day and thank them, and let them know that their service will never be forgotten.

Thank you all for honoring our veterans.