VETERANS DAY SPEECH 2012
Veterans Day observances traditionally honor all who have served in the U.S. military. Memorial Day is designated as a day of remembrance for those in our military who have died while defending this great nation during time of war.

And while we are here to honor all of those great men and women today, there is another special group that we don’t hear enough about. These are the veterans who have died for this country, long after they stopped wearing their military uniforms. While their service obligations may have expired, their love of country endured.

On September 12 of this year – 11 years and one day after the worst terrorist attack ever inflicted on American soil -- two Navy SEAL veterans made the Supreme Sacrifice while protecting their fellow Americans who were under attack at the U.S. Embassy in Benghazi (Ben Gază), Libya.

Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods knew the meaning of service. In an open letter to Glenn
Doherty, SEAL Team 3 Comrade Brandon Webb wrote in The New York Times:

“I still can’t believe you punched out early on me, but glad to hear from the guys that you fought like a hero – no surprise there… You should know, your efforts resulted in the rescue of over 20 Department of State personnel. They are alive today because of yours and Ty’s heroic action.”

Tyrone Woods was described by his mother as a “stellar SEAL who thrived on adrenaline, excitement and danger.”

In addition to his grieving mother, Ty is survived by his wife, an infant daughter, two teenage sons and countless friends.

And it’s important to remember not only the price that is paid by so many veterans to maintain our freedom – but the price paid by their heartbroken families as well.

Journalist Abigail Pesta, who is the sister of Glen Doherty, wrote, “Today we held his funeral in his
hometown of Winchester. During the procession from
the funeral home to the church, the streets were lined
with hundreds of people. Schools were let out; there
were bands playing… People were holding signs. We
have seen such a show of support – from both the
town that we grew up in and the nation that we live in.
We feel so much love.”

Scenes similar to what occurred in Winchester,
Massachusetts have taken place in many other cities
and towns across America. We revere these heroes
because they revered us – their families, their
neighbors, their fellow citizens. A country is only as
good as the people in it. And a land that could
produce such heroes is truly a land worth serving.

We should all endeavor to serve our veterans as
well as they have served their nation. We should
remember the motto of the National Commander of
The American Legion, James Koutz (Cow ts) - that
Every Day is Veterans Day.

We must honor all of their families and not just
with Blue and Gold Star Banners, but with
compassionate hearts. PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury and life-altering war wounds not only affect the veteran, but can also take an enormous toll on the family as well.

The American Legion shows its support through numerous programs such as the Family Support Network, Temporary Financial Assistance, the National Emergency Fund and Operation Comfort Warriors, just to name a few.

Sometimes all that is needed is a simple ‘thank you’ directed at the veteran or the family member for his or her sacrifice.

Part of that sacrifice too often includes unemployment or underemployment when the veteran’s military service is over.

Companies should understand that it’s smart business to hire veterans, and when members of the Guard and Reserves deploy, it is America’s business to ensure that their civilian careers do not suffer.
We must not forget the unique needs of women veterans. There are more than 1.2 million women in America today who have worn the uniform.

Women are major contributors to our military presence in Afghanistan and many have given their lives in the Global War on Terrorism. VA must adequately treat breast and cervical cancer as well as trauma that may have resulted from domestic violence, sexual harassment and assault.

It is tragic that the men and women who allow us to be safe in our homes are often without homes themselves when they shed their uniforms.

One-in-four of America’s homeless population are veterans.

Nine-out-of-ten were honorably discharged and nearly half served during the Vietnam War.
Too often today’s tattered citizen of the street was yesterday’s toast-of-the-town in a crisp uniform with rows of shining medals. This is hardly the “thanks of a grateful nation.”

While fewer than 10 percent of Americans can claim the honorable title “U.S. military veteran,” this special group often provides the vital services that enable our communities to function.

Chances are that if you surveyed your local police or fire department, you would find that a disproportionately high amount of its members are veterans.

Men like Navy veteran and Boston firefighter Paul J. Cahill, who sacrificed his life when a restaurant roof collapsed while he was fighting a fire in West Roxbury on August 29, 2007.

Or Washington State Trooper and U.S. Army veteran Tony Radulescu (Raddle eskew), who was
killed on February 23, 2012 when he was shot during a traffic stop in Kitsap County.

When an emergency hits, there is a good chance that it is a veteran that is first to respond.

Whether it’s a school teacher, construction worker or first responder, military veterans take their missions seriously.

They also take their responsibilities as citizens seriously. During the 2008 presidential election, 71 percent of U.S. veterans cast ballots, compared with only 63 percent of nonveterans.

We must heed the words of our first Commander-in-Chief, General George Washington who said in
1798, “The willingness with which our young people will fight in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.”

Born of their extraordinary accomplishments comes our extraordinary debt. And for those accomplishments and for their dedication, we must always be grateful.

God bless you all for being here, God bless our veterans and God bless America.

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