

**The  
American  
Legion**



*For God and country*

## ***Suggested Speech***

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# **Memorial Day 2019**

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United they stood and united they sacrificed.

Just before Election Day in 2018, an American soldier in Afghanistan posted on Facebook. He wrote, “As the USA gets ready to vote in our own election Tuesday, I hope everyone back home exercises their precious right to vote. And that whether the Republicans or the Democrats win, that we all remember that we have far more as Americans that unites us than divides us.

United We Stand, divided we fall. God Bless America.” – end quote.

Although the soldier who posted these wise words was a member of the National Guard and was described as a proud Republican, his family likely had little interest in the actual results of the election. It mattered not that he was also the mayor of North Ogden, Utah.

When Election Day arrived in Utah, so did the honor guard accompanying his remains – the flag draped casket of Major Brent Taylor – husband of one, father of seven and inspiration to millions.

“Utah weeps for them today,” his state’s lieutenant governor wrote of the Taylor family. He could have added that his nation wept as well.

A veteran of two tours in Iraq, Major Taylor was killed when a cowardly member of the Afghan National Security Forces opened fire on him during an insider attack near Kabul.

Major Taylor did not need to serve in the military. Like all U.S. veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, he chose to serve in the military.

Even though many fallen heroes from previous wars may have been conscripted into service, there is always a way out for those committed to avoiding such danger.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> the world will observe the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Normandy invasion. American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad will lead a delegation to the sandy shores of France – paying respects to the thousands of allied heroes who gave their lives to liberate a continent.

Labels that we hurl today like democrat, republican, red state and blue state, matter little when facing mines and machine gunfire while charging a beach.

Politics are irrelevant to a family that hears the words, “We Regret to Inform You.” In fact, Joanne Steen, a behavioral health counselor and Gold Star widow, recently wrote a book with the same title --- “We Regret to Inform You.”

To Gold Star parents she writes, “The reality that your child is dead comes in doses. Reality doesn’t have sensitivity or good manners, and you may be confronted with a harsh dose when you least expect it. Likewise, reality seems to operate on its own arrival schedule.”—end quote.

When one witnesses the actual reality of heroes dying, it is easy to mistake their missions as failed. Private Andy Rooney, who would later achieve fame as a *Sixty Minutes* commentator, was a correspondent for *Stars & Stripes*.

He interviewed a number of D-Day veterans. “All they saw was dead friends,” Rooney remembered. “Guys drowning in the water and dead people around them. And back in London headquarters they were calling it a great victory, a great success. It didn’t look like a success to the guys who were fighting it. But it turned out it was in fact a success, and the guys who were up close and saw it firsthand were wrong; and the people who had the grand view of it were right.”

We continue to lose heroes every day – in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria; and in military training accidents and missions around the world.

Some were only teenagers and many were just in their 20s. Regardless of their age, to their families they are forever young, healthy and strong.

From the American Revolution to our current operations against terrorism, one million American men and women have made the Supreme sacrifice while serving in wars and conflicts. We honor all of them - not just those with the highest medals or the heroes who fought in the most famous battles.

They all died so we can continue to cherish the things that we love – freedom, country and family.

That is why we are gathered here on Memorial Day...to honor the memory of our fallen warriors who have given everything for their country. We are also reminded on this day that in each generation, brave men and women will always step forward to take the oath of allegiance as members of America's armed forces willing to fight, and if necessary, die for the sake of freedom.

As Legionnaires, we are pledged through the Preamble of our organization's constitution to "preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars..." This solemn promise is on the back of each American Legion membership card. Yet, we do not remember our fallen brothers and sisters-in-arms because of an edict or obligatory ritual. We do so because we want to.

And we want to be there for their families. Long after the battlefield guns have been silenced and the bombs stop exploding, the children of our fallen warriors will still be missing a parent. Spouses will continue to miss their life partners. Parents will never stop grieving for their heroic sons and daughters that died way too early.



We need to be there for all of them. Nobody can replace these fallen heroes – especially in the eyes of their families—but we can offer shoulders to cry on and assurances that their loved one’s sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Maybe we can contribute in ways such as handling a car repair, babysitting or mowing a Gold Star family’s lawn. We cannot bring back the departed, but we can honor their sacrifice by caring for those whom they loved the most.

As Americans, we should all remember that freedom isn’t free. It’s only possible because our fallen heroes have paid its high price. A price paid which enables us to have ceremonies and observances like this in communities across our great country.

Major Brent Taylor called on us to be unified. When we consider the sacrifice that he and his brothers and sister-in-arms made for us, it is the least that we can do for them.

God bless you all, God bless America and God Bless our Fallen heroes.

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