



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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**Suggested Remarks for
Veterans Day
2023**

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Seventy years ago, one distinguished veteran, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, presented the nation's highest military award to another distinguished veteran - a hero of two wars.

Hiroshi Miyamura (*her ō she mēya mura*) was the son of Japanese immigrants and a proud resident of Gallup, New Mexico.

After serving with the famed all-Nisei (*knee cy*)100th Infantry Battalion in World War II, Corporal Miyamura was recalled to active duty as a machine gunner in the Korean War. When his unit came under attack by Chinese forces near the Imjin River in 1951, Miyamura is estimated to have killed more than 50 enemy soldiers.

Despite his own serious injuries, Miyamura refused to abandon his wounded comrade, Joe Anello. He carried him even after both were captured. When his captors threatened to shoot Miyamura if he did not drop Anello, his wounded friend convinced him to listen. The enemy showed no mercy as a severely wounded Miyamura and his fellow POWs were forced to march 300 miles with little food over a 5-week period.

Through indomitable will, Miyamura survived his 28 months of captivity. Miraculously, so did Anello. The battlefield actions that led to Miyamura's Medal of Honor were initially classified Top Secret by officials who feared that the enemy might retaliate against him if they had known the extent of the harm that he inflicted on their forces.

On November 29, 2022, Hiroshi Miyamura, transferred to what we in The American Legion refer to as Post Everlasting. He was 97.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the type of heroes America continues to produce – in many ways humble at home but ferociously brave on the battlefield.

Another Medal of Honor recipient, retired Marine Colonel Barney Barnum, described the combat that he saw in 1965 at Operation Harvest Moon.

“We came together as a team,” he recently told the Associated Press. “And, you know, there’s no fury unleashed that’s greater than that of a bunch of Marines that know that their buddies have been shot.” – unquote.

On July 29, 2023, Col. Barnum attended the christening of a future destroyer – the *USS Harvey C. Barnum, Jr.* An appropriate honor for an American hero.

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.

Warriors need advocates, and that is why The American Legion exists. We are here to serve veterans, their families and our communities. Veterans need each other, but, more importantly, our country needs our veterans.

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.

Stephen Ambrose once wrote, “America’s wars have been like rungs on a ladder by which it rose to greatness. No other country has triumphed so long, so consistently or on such a vast scale through force of arms.”—unquote.

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.

Veterans Day, originally known as Armistice Day, commemorates the armistice of November 11, 1918, which marked the end of World War I. Since then, this day has evolved to recognize and honor all veterans from every generation who have served in the Armed Forces of the greatest nation on earth.

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. The American Legion has been a stalwart champion in this endeavor, advocating for healthcare, education and employment opportunities for those who have served and sacrificed.

The American Legion continues to remind the public that more than 6,000 veterans a year take their own lives. We should all commit to “Be the One” to save one. The 9-8-8 crisis line is available to assist anyone who is contemplating such a heartbreaking and tragic outcome.

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.

Thank you for being here. God bless America.