



Ohio Adjutant General's Department

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Memorial Day

Remembering the brave and valorous service of our fallen heroes

May 28 is Memorial Day. It's our opportunity to remember the brave Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our great nation.

Since the first battle of the American Revolution in 1775, nearly 1.2 million service members, including members of the National Guard, have given their lives in service to their country.

Memorial Day began as Decoration Day after the Civil War 150 years ago, when citizens placed flowers by the graves of fallen Soldiers, many of whom had served in their state militias.

We continue that tradition today. We also honor Gold Star Families, family members of fallen service members, who have paid a personal price for us and our nation. I had the honor of paying tribute to several Gold Star Families who attended the annual Governor's Wreath Laying Ceremony on May 21 at the Ohio Statehouse. The ceremony at the Veterans Plaza on the grounds in downtown Columbus recognized their sacrifice and honored the memory of their loved ones and every Ohioan who has died for our freedom.

Let us reflect on the sacrifices of all of our fellow citizen-warriors who have fallen in service to our country. Let us also reflect on how their deaths have forever impacted their families, their loved ones, their friends, neighbors and the extended community.

Memorial Day has become a day to remember the deeds and sacrifices of all who have paid the ultimate sacrifice during combat. They came from all walks of life and regions of the country. They all had one thing in common — love of and loyalty to country. This bond cemented ties between them in times of trials, allowing a diverse group of Americans to achieve monumental ends.

Throughout history our brothers and sisters in arms defended the future of freedom at places like Bunker Hill and Yorktown, Gettysburg and Antietam, the trenches of France, Guadalcanal and Normandy, the Korean peninsula, Vietnam, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq. Collectively, the contributions of America's fallen heroes have resonated far beyond beachheads, jungles and desert sand — well beyond their wars or duty stations.

The words that adorn the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery, where some of our heroes are interred, also speak volumes about the bravery and valor of the men and women who risked their lives for our nation. “Not for fame or reward, not for place or rank, not lured by ambition or goaded by necessity, but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, these men suffered all, sacrificed all, dared all and died.”

From each stone that lay at Arlington, each etching on the wall, and each patriot that lay at rest overseas — each represents a Marine, Sailor, Airmen, Soldier and Coast Guardsman who left behind a lasting legacy of freedom, sacrifice and virtue — for that we are forever indebted.

During recent conflicts, hundreds of National Guard men and women have not returned home. Their duty and their sacrifice came at great cost, and reflect the changing missions of the National Guard as it has transformed into an operational force. Today’s Ohio National Guard forces are dedicated to fighting America’s wars, protecting our homeland during crises and disasters, and building global partnerships that ensure the security of our nation.

But most importantly, let’s make every day Memorial Day by never failing to honor the men and women who gave their all. Their courage in the face of certain danger, and their ultimate sacrifice, will shine like a beacon on future generations through times of conflict and uncertainty. Their selfless contributions will serve as the staunchest of warnings to our enemies that we shall never abandon the cause of liberty.

Major General Mark E. Bartman
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General