

**VETERAN'S DAY SPEECH**  
**MAYOR JASON F. CILENTO**  
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One Hundred and Three years ago, the peace that ended the Great War was achieved. An armistice was signed between the Allies and the Central Powers. On that day, November 11, 1918, the guns of both the victors and the vanquished fell silent. World War I – known as "the war to end all wars" – was over.

For the next twenty years, Americans celebrated "Armistice Day" with parades and speeches. Buglers played "Taps" at 11 o'clock in the parks or main streets or wherever the Day was being recognized. It was a tradition that for two minutes all activity was halted so that all citizens could honor those who had fallen in defense of liberty.

Today, we celebrate "Veterans' Day," but while the name has changed, its meaning and purpose remain the same. It is a day to honor and to remember those who died and those we are blessed to still have with us.

Throughout our nation's history, the story of the soldier has been the story of the American People. From Jamestown to the French and Indian Wars, from the Revolution to the War of 1812, from the Civil War to the Spanish-American War, from the Great War to the Second World War, from Korea to Vietnam, from the Gulf War to Afghanistan, and all the conflicts still going on around the world, the experiences of our soldiers, sailors, marines, coast guard and air men and women reflect the drive and

passion and idealism of our great nation. Their stories are the story of our history. America has achieved lasting greatness through them, and because of them, America rose to greatness as our veterans led by example.

I stand before you today for two purposes. The first is to honor all those veterans of history: the soldier freezing by General George Washington's side at Valley Forge; the fifteen infantry and artillery regiments from New Jersey who fought at Gettysburg; the young airmen in canvas and wood biplanes that fought gallantly against Baron von Richthofen; the marines who landed at Guadalcanal and soldiers who stormed the beaches at Normandy; the GIs who fought during the North Korean invasion; and those who suffered the heat and challenges of the war for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people.

My second purpose is to honor and recognize our recent generation of veterans -- those who today wear the uniform and bear the responsibility for defending freedom and protecting our American way of life. And while this is true even when the country is at peace, it is particularly so when America faces hostility and aggression from outside our borders.

I am speaking now to those veterans and currently serving soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen and women, and who have dedicated yourselves to the strength and survival of our nation, and willingly placed yourselves in danger to secure peace and freedom. Through this sacrifice you represent the highest duty of citizenship, and your country is grateful. All of us here today should never forget that you serve in the finest military in the greatest nation the world has ever seen. And we are the greatest because

America stands for Liberty and Freedom, a message that all veterans and soldiers, from the founding of our nation to today, transmit daily to all the oppressed peoples of the world.

In conclusion, we are all here today to honor, celebrate and salute the men and women who have served so nobly since 1776 to keep us free. We pledge that we will never forget their valor or their sacrifice.

God bless you and God bless America.