

The Importance & History of Veterans Day

Freedom is not something that is simply given. Though it is promised to every American citizen, it is a privilege that must be earned, protected, and preserved. Someone had to fight to secure the freedoms we enjoy today, and others continue to defend them. It's important to recognize the men and women who have laid down their lives and put their dreams on hold so that we may live freely.

But before discussing the broader importance of Veterans Day, I want to acknowledge the incredible selflessness of our veterans. I come from a military family; my great-grandfather served in World War II, my grandfather in Vietnam, my father in Cambodia, and now my brother is in training to continue that legacy. Having witnessed the sacrifices made by those I love, I understand how difficult it can be to truly appreciate their service unless you've seen it first-hand. Veterans do not serve for personal gain; they serve for their families, their friends, their neighbors, even for those they have never met. But most of all, they serve in order to protect the freedom we all enjoy today.

November 11, 1918, marked the end of World War I, which many believed would be "the war to end all wars." With the loss of 116,708 American soldiers, they deserved to be honored for their courage and sacrifice. In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11th as Armistice Day, a time to remember those who placed their country above themselves. The day remained known as Armistice Day through World War II and the Vietnam War. But eventually it evolved into Veterans Day, a holiday dedicated to honoring all who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Since the founding of our nation, more than 41 million Americans have served in uniform. Each of them played a part in protecting the freedoms we hold dear, and it is our duty to remember and thank them not just on Veterans Day, but every day.

Some of you were young, maybe even freshly eighteen, when you chose to serve. Others were older, taking different paths into the military. You may have enlisted, joined through ROTC, or been drafted. Some of you served your contract and returned home; others renewed your commitment and continued to serve. No matter when or how you started this journey, I thank you all the same. It is not the politicians or world leaders who make our country great—it's the people in this room, the ones who stood up, answered the call, and dedicated their lives to something greater than themselves.

As we reflect on Veterans Day, let us remember that freedom has never been free. It has been protected by the courage, sacrifice, and endless work of the men and women who have worn the uniform of the Armed Forces. I hold no doubt that your service has allowed me to stand here today, as it has many others. There is no telling how the world, my world, would be without your fight.

To every veteran, past and present, I offer my deepest gratitude. Your bravery has shaped our nation's history and continues to secure its future. Because of you, we can live, speak, and dream freely. Veterans Day is not just a date on the calendar—it is a reminder of the best within us that you exemplify: honor, courage, and selfless service. Today and every day, we thank you.