

MEMORIAL DAY 2008

(GREETINGS)

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE A DRUGSTORE OWNER IN WATERLOO, NEW YORK, SUGGESTED THAT ALL BUSINESSES CLOSE FOR ONE DAY TO HONOR, IN A SOLEMN AND PATRIOTIC MANNER, THE FALLEN SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES DURING THE CIVIL WAR — AN IDEA THAT WAS WELL RECEIVED. FOR ONE DAY BUSINESSES CLOSED, WIDOWS PLACED WILDFLOWERS ON FRESH GRAVES, TOWNSPEOPLE MADE WREATHS AND CROSSES TO PLACE UPON THE HEADSTONES, FLAGS WAVED PROUDLY AT HALF STAFF. AN AMERICAN TRADITION WAS BORN.

MEMORIAL DAY BRINGS WITH IT SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE — MEMORIES OF FALLEN COMRADES, FRIENDS, SONS, DAUGHTERS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS. IT BRINGS WITH IT A SOLEMN STATE OF MIND AND A BURNING DESIRE TO HONOR THOSE WHO SO PROUDLY STOOD BEHIND THE IDEALS UPON WHICH THIS GREAT COUNTRY WAS FOUNDED AND WERE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR WHAT’S RIGHT.

I ASK THAT TODAY YOU NOT ACCEPT FEELINGS OF GRIEF OR AFFLICTION WITHOUT ENCOMPASSING A FEELING OF HONOR, PATRIOTISM, AND PRIDE.

GENERAL GEORGE PATTON ONCE SAID DURING A MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE, “IN MY MIND WE CAME HERE TO THANK GOD THAT MEN LIKE THESE LIVED RATHER THAN REGRET THAT THEY DIED.” I ASK THAT TODAY YOU EMBRACE THOSE WORDS IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

AS WE STAND TOGETHER TODAY ON THIS DAY, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THE COST OF FREEDOM COMES WITH A HIGH PRICE IN HUMAN TERMS. AND, AS WE AS A NATION REMEMBER THE LIVES LOST, WE CELEBRATE THE LIVES LIVED AND ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL.

TODAY, WE CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE WHO HAVE PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM AND PEACE. WE CELEBRATE THOSE WHO SERVED IN CONFLICT TO PROTECT OUR LAND, THOSE WHO SURRENDERED THEIR DREAMS TO PRESERVE THE HOPE OF OUR NATION, AND WHO FOUGHT TO KEEP AMERICA FREE.

WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THEIR SERVICE, RESPECT THEIR DEVOTION TO DUTY, AND MIRROR THEIR

DEVOTION BY DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES TO ENSURE THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED.

ABOVE ALL, IN ORDER TO REPAY OUR DEBT TO THEM, WE GRATEFUL CITIZENS, MUST HONOR OUR OBLIGATION TO PRESERVE THEIR MEMORY WE MUST NOT ONLY REMEMBER OUR FALLEN HEROES — IT IS OUR OBLIGATION TO TEACH OUR YOUTH THAT NOTHING COMES WITHOUT COST, AND THAT SACRIFICES ARE MEANINGLESS WITHOUT REMEMBRANCE.

COLLECTIVELY, THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AMERICA'S FALLEN HEROES HAVE RESONATED FAR BEYOND BEACHHEADS, JUNGLES AND DESERT SANDS...WELL BEYOND THEIR WARS OR DUTY STATIONS. WHEREAS GALLANT SAILORS, AIRMEN, SOLDIERS, MARINES AND COAST GUARDSMEN CONQUERED THE SUM TOTAL OF

**THEIR FEARS AND ENDURED INCONCEIVABLE MISERIES,
ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR BELIEF IN IDEAL VALUES. IN
DOING SO, THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED A STANDARD OF
COURAGE AND HONOR FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD TO SEE.**

**OUR NATION'S FALLEN WERE AMONG THE MOST
PATRIOTIC OF PATRIOTS. THEY LOVED THEIR COUNTRY,
SO THEY READILY ENDURED LONG PERIODS OF TIME ON
DANGEROUS FOREIGN LANDS. THEY CHERISHED
FREEDOM, AND ABOVE ALL THEY VALUED LIFE, YET
WITHOUT HESITATION BRAVELY STOOD READY TO GIVE
THEIR OWN IN THE NAME OF GOD AND COUNTRY.**

**AS YOU GATHER WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND
COMRADES TODAY IN CELEBRATING THE LIVES OF
AMERICA'S HEROES, I ASK THAT YOU NOT ONLY PAY
TRIBUTE TO THEM, BUT ALSO TO THEIR FAMILIES.
THOUGH WE CANNOT FULLY COMPREHEND THE SORROW**

THAT THEY CARRY, WE MUST ENCOURAGE THE PRESERVATION OF THEIR SPIRIT, DREAMS, AND SACRIFICES.

WE STAND UNITED UNDER THE SAME SENTINEL OF FREEDOM THAT OUR FALLEN SOLDIERS OF THE PAST SO GALLANTLY DEFENDED. WITH THAT, MY HOPE IS THAT WE ALL LEAVE HERE TODAY WITH A RENEWED SENSE OF PATRIOTISM AND HOPE, BECAUSE HOPE EMBODIES WHAT HAS MADE OUR NATION GREAT.

IN THE WORDS OF GENERAL JAMES A. GARFIELD "THEY SUMMED UP AND PERFECTED, BY ONE SUPREME ACT, THE HIGHEST VIRTUES OF MEN AND CITIZENS. FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY THEY ACCEPTED DEATH, AND THUS RESOLVED ALL DOUBTS, AND MADE IMMORTAL THEIR PATRIOTISM AND VIRTUE."

**FROM EACH STONE THAT LAY AT ARLINGTON, EACH
ETCHING ON THE WALL, AND EACH PATRIOT THAT LAY AT
REST OVERSEAS — EACH REPRESENTS A SAILOR,
AIRMEN, SOLDIER, MARINE AND COAST GUARDSMEN WHO
LEFT BEHIND A LASTING LEGACY OF FREEDOM,
SACRIFICE AND VIRTUE— FOR THAT WE ARE FOREVER
INDEBTED.**

GOD BLESS YOU AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.