

What Does Veterans Day Mean to You?

The VFW asks all Americans find a veteran and listen to their story

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WASHINGTON — For the members the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), as well as the millions of others who have worn the cloth of our military, all veterans share a common bond. At one time in their lives, they raised their right hand and solemnly swore an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States.” No matter if they served for two years or 42 years, all veterans sacrificed something to serve their country, and if called upon, to lay down their lives in defense of it. Every one of them have a story to tell. However, those who have served only make up roughly one percent of our nation’s population, and with the end of our nation’s longest war and the veteran population dwindling, it’s important to remember why we have Veterans Day in the first place.

Initially called Armistice Day to commemorate the end of World War I, it was officially adopted in 1926 through a congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar congressional action. Now, if WWI had been “the war to end all wars” as it was called, Nov. 11 might be still called Armistice Day. However, World War II would prove otherwise. Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WWII and Korea, Congress decided to make the day an occasion to honor all those who have served America. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming Nov. 11 as Veterans Day. Since then, Veterans Day would come to acknowledge veterans of all wars, and then all who once served in the U.S. military.

Veterans Day is an opportunity to publicly commemorate the contributions of living veterans and to show appreciation toward them. But beyond the free meals, discounts, tributes, and platitudes given to veterans on this day, there is also an opportunity to truly show them your appreciation. If you find a veteran, ask them a few questions. Ask them when they served, where they served, what branch did they serve in, what did they do while they served, what was it like to serve, and finally, why did they serve. Listen to their story and then you will truly know about the service you are thanking them for. It will make all the difference to them and might give you a greater appreciation for our veterans and the freedoms they ensured we can all enjoy.

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