



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Veterans Day 2012 ~ Sunday, November 11 ~ 'We will always remember. We will always be proud.'

THOMAS F. O'MARA November 9, 2012



America will be observing this year's Veterans Day, Sunday, November 11th, with the promise of troops coming home, but with so many others still bravely engaged in the war against terrorism.

It will be observed at a time when the world's stage remains embroiled in uncertainty and instability. It truly is a momentous and dangerous time in world history and our annual tribute to veterans takes on greater and greater meaning.

Former President Ronald Reagan, standing tall on the coast of France on June 6, 1984, offered these words to commemorate the 40th anniversary of D-Day, "We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free."

So we still stand proud in [local ceremonies around the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions](#) again this year to honor the sacrifices and the victories of our soldiers – past, present, and future. In so doing, we reaffirm our pride in this nation's servicemen and servicewomen and, of course, we turn our thoughts and prayers to those young soldiers whom we've lost from here at home in the recent past – including Ryan Jayne of Corning, Christopher Bordoni of Ithaca, Christopher Scott of Tyrone, Devin Snyder of Cohocton, Michael Plank of Cameron Mills, Zachary Smith of Hornell and Justin Hartford of Elmira.

Since the terrible unfolding of September 11, 2001 this generation has realized, all too painfully, that our freedom here at home can be threatened at any moment. We all have been reminded, as well, that our troops always stand ready to protect freedom again and again. The freedoms we cherish have been hard-won by the soldiers of previous generations and by those of this generation who have continued to serve.

They are true American heroes, and we are grateful to each and every one of them.

Travel through this region's individual communities and it's striking to reflect on the common landmarks that stand tall as reminders of the guiding principles and the underlying strengths of our nation: town and village halls, county courthouses, churches, elementary schools, local public libraries. These fundamental American places still echo the very reasons for our nation's founding and her endurance as the world's great democracy.

And so we can't forget the monuments and memorials that America's communities have seen fit to build to honor our veterans. Indeed, there may be no more powerful or poignant

landmarks anywhere and we'll gather in so many of these places on Sunday, November 11th, to observe Veterans Day.

Sacrifice is the fundamental truth that we remember and honor on Veterans Day.

To always honor our veterans is the reason that New York State government seeks to constantly recognize military service through the development of new laws and the administration of programs and services that seek to address the many challenges facing today's veterans in areas such as health care, employment and education.

For example, each house of the state Legislature has established a veterans committee dedicated to these affairs. In the Senate, the Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee concentrates each and every legislative session to identify and formulate legislative responses to the challenges confronting our veterans. One of this year's new laws, for example, created a Veterans' Jobs Bank within the state Division of Veterans' Affairs to assist returning servicemen and servicewomen in finding employment (Senate Bill Number 7766, Chapter 269 of the Laws of 2012).

The state [Division of Veterans' Affairs](#) was established in 1945 to assist veterans, members of the armed forces, their families and their dependents. Since then, the division -- in concert with its offices in counties locally and statewide -- has strongly advocated for New York's millions of veterans and veterans' issues at the local, state and national levels. It's a proud history of service.

Over the past year, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has unveiled an ["Experience Counts"](#) initiative to help returning veterans better transition into the civilian workforce, and the state's attorney general issued a new resource guide for veterans and active duty service members.

Honoring our veterans is also the reason that the New York State Senate has seen fit to establish a [Veterans Hall of Fame](#). Earlier this year I paid tribute to one area veteran, World War II combat veteran and well-known Chemung County historian [J. Arthur "Archie" Kieffer](#), by inducting him into the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

The observance of Veterans Day is appropriate and meaningful as one way that we, as American citizens, collectively show our support for our troops, as well as keep those we know in our thoughts and prayers.

It's an occasion, most of all, to honor the memories of all those who have gone before -- and all those who, today, still lead the way.

[Watch a special tribute to New York State veterans.](#)