



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Paying Tribute to Those who have Died for our Country

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This past weekend we marked the unofficial start of summer by celebrating the long Memorial Day Weekend. There were picnics, parties and parades. We spent most of our time enjoying these wonderful activities, but how many of us actually stopped to think about the real reason for the holiday weekend? How many of us visited a cemetery to pay tribute to those who have died in our nation's service?

Memorial Day, which was originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have sacrificed their lives for our country. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John A. Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was first observed on May 30, 1868 when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

New York was the first state to officially recognize the holiday in 1873. Nearly a century later, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress in 1971. Today it is celebrated throughout our country every year on the last Monday in May.

It is important for us to reflect on the meaning of Memorial Day and to remember the sacrifices of all of our veterans and military personnel, both past and present. It is also very important for us to acknowledge the American troops who are currently stationed around the globe fighting for our country, and to keep them in our prayers.

Although Memorial Day has come and gone, let's continue to think about ways we can honor and support our military members. For more information on how you can get involved please take the time to visit <http://www.ourmilitary.mil/index.aspx>. You can help by sending care packages, writing letters, sending phone cards, and/or donating to one of the many organizations established to aid the brave men and women who are fighting for our country and for our freedom.