



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of May 31, 2021 ~ 'Courage and conviction honored on Memorial Day'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 31, 2021

| ISSUE: **MEMORIAL DAY**



Therein lies the essence of Memorial Day: To pause in our daily lives, in our own ways, in our own places, and to remember the American soldiers who now rest “in honored glory” in service to us, our families, our communities, state, and nation.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and

policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Courage and conviction honored on Memorial Day"

From Arlington to Gettysburg to Woodlawn and hundreds of other national veterans' cemeteries and monuments across this land, Americans will gather once again to observe Memorial Day.

The nation's long-standing Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery in the nation's capital is highlighted by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, on which the following words are inscribed, "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

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The New York State Senate opens its daily legislative sessions by standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, which is then followed by an Invocation or a moment of silence. Several years ago, in late May 2016, Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I invited the late Reverend Lewis Brown of Painted Post, who passed away last September, to join us at the Capitol to deliver the Opening Prayer in the Senate and Assembly. Some of you may recall Father Lew. He was the Chaplain of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Elmira and a member of the Knights of Columbus. He served a number of parishes including, in his last assignment, All Saints Parish in Corning. Prior to all of that, however, he served 22 years of active duty as a United States Navy Chaplain in various capacities including with the Marines in Okinawa, Japan; as ship's company aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz; and at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., with duty at Arlington National Cemetery.

Five years ago, Father Lew offered one of the most-well-received Invocations ever delivered in our Chamber. It was a "Prayer for the Military" – one so fitting as we prepared for Memorial Day that year – which included the inspiring words "to strengthen our conviction and give us the courage to be a home for the brave and a land for the free."

In fact, Father Lew received a standing ovation in the Senate that day following his invocation. I'd never witnessed a standing O for an invocation in the Senate prior or since, and many of my more senior colleagues at that time commented that they had never seen one either. It was truly an amazing prayer from a great American in memory of so many great Americans!

Particularly memorable for me were those repeated words, conviction and courage. It is conviction and courage, after all, that has led and will always lead our soldiers into battle. And it is through our own personal conviction and courage, in our own ways and walks of life, through which we can best honor the sacrifices of our military men and women.

Toward that end, we continue to raise the American Flag.

We proudly recognize New York State as the “Birthplace of Memorial Day,” which our nation has observed since the time of the Civil War

Of course, we always turn enduring thoughts and prayers to the young soldiers, the heroes, who have been recently lost. We honor wounded warriors and we support the men and women serving in harm’s way at this very moment -- shining examples of bravery and eternal honor.

We salute all New York State veterans and the millions more across the nation. I have been privileged to pay tribute to the service of outstanding local veterans through the New York State Senate Veterans’ Hall of Fame, into which more than 400 veterans have been inducted since 2005. This includes the following area veterans that I have had the privilege to induct since 2011: Philip C. Smith of Schuyler County; J. Arthur “Archie” Kieffer, Chemung County; former Painted Post Mayor Roswell L. “Roz” Crozier, Jr.; Anthony J. “Tony” Specchio, Sr., Schuyler County; P. Earle Gleason, Yates County; Warren A. Thompson, Steuben County; and Paul C. “Digger” Vendetti, Chemung County. The Senate’s online Veterans’ Hall of Fame can be viewed on my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

Because of our veterans, we can look into the eyes of the young people in our lives this Memorial Day, the faces of the future, and have faith that they, too, will be instilled with the spirit to keep America strong, to keep believing that the American way is a good, decent, worthwhile way.

In the end, perhaps this is the greatest justice for all of the missions flown, the foxholes dug, the hills taken, and the battles fought on land and sea.

America’s Armed Forces have made and will continue to make the ultimate sacrifice to keep America free, so that she can lead the way to a more free world.

The sacrifices of our military will keep alive America’s promise, so that people throughout the world will look to her for inspiration.

Our servicemen and servicewomen will keep America strong, so that other nations will draw courage from her strength.

For as long as we remember and keep them alive in our hearts, we will stand as we do -- free in a land of opportunity and promise.

The spirit of this salute will endure and remain strong for the future.

God Bless America and God Bless our troops.

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