



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

'God Bless America and God Bless Our Troops'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 30, 2022

| ISSUE: **MEMORIAL DAY**



Therein lies the essence of Memorial Day: To pause in our daily lives and remember the American soldiers who now rest “in honored glory” in devotion and service to all Americans -- to our families, our friends and neighbors, 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, "God Bless America and God Bless Our Troops"

From Arlington and Gettysburg to Woodlawn and Bath 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."

Therein lies the essence of Memorial Day: To pause in our daily lives and remember the American soldiers who now rest "in honored glory" in devotion and service to all Americans -- to our families, our friends and neighbors, our communities, state, and nation.

Many words have been shared on Memorial Day through the generations and what remains striking is how often these words are repeated: conviction and courage. It is conviction and courage, after all, that has led and will always lead our soldiers into battle. Therefore, it must be 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," in Waterloo, Seneca County, 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 and, yes, courage and conviction.

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 who 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; Paul C. "Digger" Vendetti, Chemung County; and Richard T. "Dick" Gillespie, Yates County. Very soon, we will be announcing this year's inductees.

The Senate will conduct its 2022 virtual Veterans' Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Monday to coincide with Memorial Day. This year, I am proud to induct Dennis L. "Denny" Wolfe, Sr. of Chemung County. Denny is a well-known area Vietnam War veteran, and the founder and director of the Vietnam War Museum in Elmira. We take this opportunity to salute the lives of veterans who have made such a difference for our local communities, our state, and the United States of America. Denny Wolfe courageously served our nation in Vietnam and then returned home, where he has devoted his life to tirelessly working to honor and assist his fellow veterans and strengthen our community.

The Senate's virtual Veterans' Hall of Fame induction ceremony can be viewed on my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

Several years ago, asked about the importance of Memorial Day, the director of both the Woodlawn and Bath National Cemeteries, Duane Mendenhall, shared this reflection, "Every single freedom and liberty we enjoy can be traced back to a battlefield ... How can words suffice to honor our fallen veterans? We honor them by remembering they loved America. Most of all they valued life by bravely readying themselves to die in service of this country."

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 freer 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.