



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of May 29, 2023 -- 'The enduring spirit of salute to our fallen heroes'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 29, 2023

| ISSUE: **MEMORIAL DAY 2023**



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, our state, and our 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, "The enduring spirit of salute to our fallen heroes"

From Arlington and Gettysburg to Woodlawn, Bath, Romulus, and thousands of other 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, our state, and our 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, that we can best honor the sacrifices of our military men and women.

Former President Ronald Reagan once said, "If words cannot repay the debt we owe ... surely with our actions we must strive to keep faith with them and with the vision that led them to battle and to final sacrifice."

In that spirit, we continue to raise the American Flag. Here at home, we proudly recognize New York State as the "Birthplace (in Waterloo, Seneca County) of Memorial Day" -- which our nation has observed since the time of the Civil War -- as well as stand proud at the newly designated New York State Veterans Cemetery (formerly known as the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery) in nearby Romulus.

We turn enduring thoughts and prayers to our soldiers, the heroes, who gave their lives. We honor wounded warriors, and we pledge our support to all those serving in harm's way at this very moment -- shining examples of bravery, eternal respect 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; Richard T. “Dick” Gillespie, Yates County; and Dennis L. “Denny” Wolfe, Sr., Chemung County. You can read more about each of these inductees on the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame website at: <https://www.nysenate.gov/honoring-our-veterans>. This year’s inductees will be announced this November in recognition of our annual Veteran’s Day observance.

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.”

May the spirit of this salute endure forever.

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