



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION



March 29, National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Commemorative Partner Speech Template (~10:00)

(locations other than memorials)

Good afternoon (evening), everyone, and welcome to this ceremony honoring Vietnam veterans on this, our National Vietnam War Veterans Day (substitute appropriate language if event is not hosted on March 29).

I am (name) with (Commemorative Partner name). (Option - additional bonefides, if necessary) Our organization (optional statement on commitment as VWC Commemorative Partner).

Truly, we are proud partners with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration! This national Commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the secretary of defense and launched by the president in 2012. Its primary purpose ... to thank and honor Vietnam veterans and their



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families for their service and sacrifice. Today (tonight), we join thousands of communities throughout this Nation in doing just that.

For those who may not be aware, The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 established the 29th of March, in perpetuity, as a national day to recognize the previously unsung patriotism of our Vietnam veterans. So, National Vietnam War Veterans Day joined the six other annual, military-centric, national observances codified in law; among them ... Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

Our Commander-in-Chief also issued a presidential proclamation in 2017, which stated, and I quote ... “To ensure the sacrifices of the 9 million heroes who served during this difficult chapter of our country's history are remembered for generations to come, I signed into law the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017, designating March 29 of each year as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Throughout this Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, and every March 29 thereafter,



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we will honor all those who answered our Nation's call to duty.

We vow to never again confuse personal disapproval of war with prejudice against those who honorably wear the uniform of our Armed Forces. With conviction, our Nation pledges our enduring respect, our continuing care, and our everlasting commitment to all Vietnam veterans.” Unquote.

Now, many people ask, “why March 29th?” Well, the answer is multifaceted. First, March 29, 1973 was the day U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disestablished. In addition, March 29, 1973 was the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. Finally, March 29, 1973 was the day Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war. Therefore, March 29th is a fitting choice for our National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

In addition, the president’s proclamation lists the number of veterans who served during this period as 9 million. This number reflects the fact that our national Commemoration honors everyone who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces from



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November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975. No distinction is being made between veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period. All were called to serve, none could self-determine where they were stationed, and all were seen in the same way by a country that could not separate the war from the warrior. Each person who served during this period deserves our profound thanks.

People also ask, “how were these bookend dates chosen?” Again, the answer is clear ... November 1, 1955 was selected to coincide with the official designation of the Military Assistance Advisory Group-Vietnam, or MAAG-V, while May 15, 1975 marks the end of the battle precipitated by the seizure of the SS Mayaguez, and the names of our Service members lost in that battle are listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

So today (tonight), we gather for three key reasons: first, to honor those from **(community name) who, in President Abraham Lincoln’s words, gave their “... last, full**



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measure of devotion.” Those, who to us are family, are also counted among the 58,318 men and women – their average age ... 23 years – whose names are engraved in the polished black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, also known as “The Wall,” in Washington, D.C. Please join me in a moment of silence, respecting their collective sacrifice. *[20-30 seconds of silence]*

Thank you. Next, we recognize those who served, but are no longer among us, as well as their families, who endured untold sacrifices in supporting their service. If you are family to someone who served during the Vietnam War period but is no longer with us, would you please stand in their place and allow us to honor you both? *[lead applause]*

Finally, we gather today (tonight) to humbly thank the Vietnam veterans living in our community, so I ask everyone who served on active duty at any time from 1 November 1955 to 15 May 1975, regardless of location, please stand (only if seated; if all are standing, modify remarks to accommodate) if you are able ... or raise your





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hand if you are not ... so we might recognize your service and sacrifice, and finally acknowledge you in the way you so richly deserve! *[slight pause for standing]* Ladies & gentlemen ... your Vietnam veterans! *[lead applause]*

[when applause begins to wane] And, if their families will stand **(same as above)** and join them ... you also are to be commended for the sacrifices you've endured for this country! *[lead renewed applause]*

[wait until they are seated again] Clearly, there is something about this special day that stirs our hearts ... and helps cleanse those who served.

Is it the memory of those whose gave the ultimate sacrifice cutting into our hearts the same way their names are etched in the black rock of The Wall?

Or, the sobering fact that 1,589 **(as of Feb 28, 2019)** are still considered missing in action and their families await word of their fate as we continue our diligent work to fulfill our promise and



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bring them home. Or, that more than 350 thousand American warriors carry both seen and unseen scars from this war, and more than likely some carrying those scars are among us this day (night).

Perhaps it is the fact that those who just stood returned home to a Nation in turmoil, and the vast majority received no recognition for their service or welcome home ceremonies hosted by their communities, replete with applause, waving flags and cheers.

These service members, who had chosen to honor our Nation's call, were encouraged to travel home, not in uniform, but in civilian clothes due to the unrest in our country, and in many cases ... sheer disdain for those who wore one of the uniforms of our Military.

Although profoundly impacted by their experiences, those who were able quietly slipped back into the lives they had left.

Whatever the reason, it is important that every one of you Vietnam veterans, and your families, understand the prominent place you now occupy in the conscience of our Nation, and the



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remarkable measure of esteem in which you are held by friends, neighbors and countrymen.

Hopefully, the following facts will lend credence to those words ... over the past **7 years**, more than **11,000** local, state and federal organizations, including **(Commemorative Partner name)**, have come alongside our Department of Defense as Commemorative Partners with the Vietnam War Commemoration ... these partners cumulatively have hosted **15 thousand** ceremonies in towns and cities across the country, during which Americans have been inspired to publicly and individually thank and honor **2.3 million** of our **6.4 million** living Vietnam veterans and the families of the 9 million who served during the Vietnam War period.

While more remains to be done, these accomplishments, along with the establishment of our annual National Vietnam War Veterans Day, all point to remarkable progress as we pursue this noble mission.



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Today (tonight), we have the distinct privilege to add to those numbers. As a lasting memento of the Nation's gratitude, the Commemoration designed a Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin with the intent of having Commemorative Partners publicly present one to each veteran who served during the Vietnam War period.

This lapel pin is beautifully struck and features an eagle's head, representing courage, honor and dedicated service; stripes, representing our Nation's flag; and six stars, representing the allies who served, sacrificed and fought alongside one another; all encircled by a ring of blue, matching the canton of our national flag and signifying vigilance, perseverance and justice. The phrase "A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You" is embossed on the reverse side, along with the Commemoration's name.

****Now, it is my privilege to invite (name), with (Commemorative Partner), to join me up front to present Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins on behalf of the Nation to each of our Vietnam veterans in attendance who have never received one.**



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Veterans, as your name is read by (name), please come forward to receive your lapel pin and remain up here with us for a group photo after all the presentations are complete.

Also, if there is anyone here tonight whose name is not read and you served on active duty in the U.S. Military at any time between November 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975, regardless of location, we invite you to come forward and we will be privileged to present your lapel pin. And families, you absolutely are encouraged to take pictures!

Normally, we would ask everyone to hold their applause until all lapel pins have been presented, but we've been holding our applause for 50 years! So, I encourage you all to stand, cheer, applaud, stamp your feet and let these men and women know you love them throughout all the lapel pin presentations!

(name), the floor is yours ... *[move offstage to table]*





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****ALTERNATE LAPEL PIN SCRIPT**

We are especially privileged to have join us up front

(name(s)) & former Military affiliation

(if known).

Representing all our Vietnam veterans in attendance tonight,
we are honored to present a Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin to this
(these) patriot(s) on behalf of a grateful Nation.

[following presento & applause] Ladies and gentlemen ... your
hero(es)! *[continued applause]*

And, if you are a Vietnam veteran in our audience today
(tonight), please visit the Commemoration booth (**Commemorative**
Partner name table at the back) following our ceremony; we will be
privileged to present each of you with your own lapel pin.

Thank you all for attending today (tonight). I encourage
everyone here to please take a moment before you depart to reach





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out and shake the hand of one of those who just identified themselves as a Vietnam veteran or family member ... they all deserve our thanks and admiration.

Join the Nation ... thank a Vietnam veteran!