



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
**VIETNAM WAR
COMMEMORATION**



March 29, National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Commemorative Partner Speech Template (~10:00)

(memorial locations only)

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

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

Truly, we are proud partners with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, and are privileged to honor Vietnam veterans and their families from **(name of the town, city, county or area)** here at the **(name of the memorial)**!

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

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Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

Today (tonight), we join thousands of communities throughout our 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 holidays codified in law; among them ... Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

Our 45th President also issued a presidential proclamation in 2017, which stated, and I quote ... “To ensure the sacrifices of the millions of 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

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Anniversary of the Vietnam War, and every March 29 thereafter, 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. So you can see, 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

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who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces from 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 earned and rightly 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 (**this morning, tonight**), we gather here at the **(name of the memorial)** for three key reasons: first, to honor those from

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(community name) who, in President Abraham Lincoln's words, gave their "... last, full measure of devotion." Clearly, there is something about this special place that stirs our souls ... and helps cleanse those who served. Perhaps it is the memories that arise when reading the **(number)** names of family, friends and neighbors represented on **(carved in or embossed on)** this memorial.

Those, whom to us are family, are also counted among the 58,281 men and women – their average age ... 22 years, 9 months – 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. [15-20 seconds of silence]**

****Or, if wreath-laying ceremony is planned**

At this time, I invite **(name)** to come forward. He **(She)** joins me today representing **(Commemorative**

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Partner name). Together, we will lay a wreath at this **(name of the memorial)** in an act of unity, both as a local community and as part of our Nation ... and in quiet reflection ... to honor those warriors who made the ultimate sacrifice.

(Insert ceremonial wreath-laying movements)

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 there is anyone here who is family to someone who served during the Vietnam War period but is no longer with us, would you raise your hand in their place and allow us to honor you both? *[quietly wait as hands are raised // lead respectful applause]* Thank you, for the sacrifices you made that enabled your loved one to serve. *[Or, if no hands are raised]* **(Although there are no families with us today (this morning, this evening) that meet that distinction, we know there are many living here in**

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(community name) and I thank them for the sacrifices they made that enabled their loved one to serve.)

Finally, we gather today **(tonight)** to humbly thank and honor the Vietnam veterans living in this community. Accordingly, I ask everyone who served on active duty at any time from 1 November 1955 to 15 May 1975, regardless of location, to please stand **(only if seated; if all are standing, modify remarks to accommodate)** if you are able ... or raise your hand if you are not ... so we might recognize your service and sacrifice, and finally acknowledge you in the way you so richly deserve! Ladies & gentlemen ... your Vietnam veterans!

[before 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!

[wait until they are seated again] Clearly, there is something about this special day, and this hallowed place, that inspires us to pause and reflect.

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Is it the memory of those whose gave the ultimate sacrifice ...
cutting into our hearts the same way their names are etched
(engraved, embossed) in this memorial?

Or, the sobering fact that 1,549 (as of Feb 13, 2024) 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
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 **(identified
themselves as Vietnam veterans)** uniquely comprehend what this
day truly represents. After all, they served and sacrificed, yet
received no thank yous, no cheers, no parades. Although
profoundly impacted by their experiences, those who were able
quietly slipped back into the lives they had left ... as if they had
never been gone.

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Now, there is no denying that 50 years is a long time to wait.

Regardless, it is vital that each and every one of you Vietnam veterans, and your families, understand the prominent place you now occupy in the conscience of our Nation, and the high measure of esteem in which you are held by friends, neighbors and countrymen.

Hopefully, the following facts will lend even more credence to my words ... over the past **12 years**, more than **13,000** local, state and federal organizations, including **(Commemorative Partner)**, have come alongside the Department of Defense as Commemorative Partners with our Vietnam War Commemoration.

These partners cumulatively have hosted **27 thousand** ceremonies in towns and cities across the country, during which Americans have been inspired to publicly and individually thank and honor nearly **4 million** Vietnam veterans and their families thus far.

That equates to **57 percent** of the **7 million** veterans living today in America and abroad who served during the Vietnam War

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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.

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.

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sacrifice and service! (name), the floor is yours ... [*move
offstage to presentation area*]

****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.

Ladies and gentlemen ... your hero(es)!

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.

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

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