

**THANK YOU. I AM VERY HONORED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY, AT THE FIRST AMERICAN LEGION CONVENTION OF THIS CENTURY.**

**I WANT TO WELCOME ALL OF YOU TO MILWAUKEE AND THE GREAT STATE OF WISCONSIN.**

**BE SURE TO SPEND SOME MONEY WHILE YOU'RE HERE IN WISCONSIN AND HELP THE ECONOMY. AND PLEASE COME BACK IN THE NEAR FUTURE.**

**ADMITTEDLY I'M A LITTLE BIASED, BUT YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE BEST PLACE IN THE NATION TO HOLD YOUR CONVENTION. YOU WILL SURELY RECEIVE A WARM WELCOME HERE.**

**WE HAVE A STRONG AND VIBRANT AMERICAN LEGION TRADITION WITH 76-THOUSAND MEMBERS AND 527 POSTS THROUGHOUT WISCONSIN.**

**SINCE 1920, THE LOCAL LEGION POST HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF CIVIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY IN WISCONSIN COMMUNITIES.**

**I GREW UP IN THE SMALL TOWN OF ELROY, AND I HAVE VERY FOND MEMORIES OF OUR LOCAL LEGION HALL.**

**BUT I HAVE AN EVEN FINDER APPRECIATION FOR THE VETERANS WHO MADE THE LEGION SUCH AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR COMMUNITY.**

**THEY MARCHED IN OUR PARADES, DECORATED THE GRAVES ON MEMORIAL DAY, AND DONATED GENEROUSLY TO EVERY CAUSE IN OUR TOWN.**

**BUT THEY WERE MORE THAN THAT. THEY ... LIKE EACH OF YOU ... ARE TRUE AMERICAN PATRIOTS.**

**MARK TWAIN ONCE SAID “IN THE BEGINNING OF A CHANGE, THE PATRIOT IS A SCARCE MAN, AND BRAVE AND HATED AND SCORNE.**

**WHEN HIS CAUSE SUCCEEDS, THE TIMID JOIN HIM,  
FOR THEN IT COSTS NOTHING TO BE A PATRIOT.”**

**YOU, MY FRIENDS, WERE AMERICAN PATRIOTS  
FROM DAY ONE, WERE AMERICAN PATRIOTS  
DURING TIMES OF UNREST ABROAD AND AT HOME  
AND CONTINUE TO BE AMERICAN PATRIOTS TO  
THIS DAY.**

**YOU ANSWERED THE CALL TO DEFEND THIS  
NATION AND ITS PRINCIPLES DURING HISTORY’S  
DARKEST HOURS.**

**YOU GAVE US THE GIFT OF DEMOCRACY, AND WE  
PAUSE TODAY TO CELEBRATE THE LEGACY YOU  
HAVE ESTABLISHED.**

**IN RECOGNITION OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND  
SACRIFICES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO**

**SERVED IN OUR NATION'S ARMED FORCES, THE  
U.S. CONGRESS RECENTLY DECLARED THE  
AMERICAN G-I AS THE PERSON OF THE CENTURY.**

**THE CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION STATES THAT  
THE AMERICAN G-I KEPT THE FLAME OF FREEDOM  
BURNING BRIGHTLY THROUGH THE GRIM AND  
DARK SKIES; THROUGH BLOOD, SWEAT AND  
TEARS; THROUGH TIMES OF ADULATION, AND  
SADLY, THROUGH TIMES OF UNREASONABLE  
CONTEMPT.**

**ALL OF YOU FORMER G-I'S CAN BE PROUD OF  
YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THE WORLDWIDE  
CRUSADE FOR FREEDOM IS YOUR LEGACY, AND  
THE TRIUMPH OF DEMOCRACY IS YOUR VICTORY.**

**ALL OF YOU RIGHTFULLY COULD HAVE RESTED ON  
YOUR LAURELS WHEN THE FIGHTING ENDED.**

**BUT YOUR SERVICE DID NOT END AT THE TIME OF  
DISCHARGE FROM THE MILITARY. YOU HELPED  
ESTABLISH AND RUN AMERICAN LEGION HALLS**

**ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AFTER YOU RETURNED HOME.**

**THAT ALLOWED YOU TO CONTINUE TO SERVE YOUR NATION, YOUR STATE, AND YOUR COMMUNITIES IN SO MANY WAYS.**

**EACH DAY, LEGIONNAIRES AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS PERFORM ACTS OF SERVICE THAT GO UNNOTICED. YOU VISIT THE SICK IN V-A HOSPITALS, YOU SPEAK TO SCHOOLCHILDREN ABOUT PATRIOTISM, AND YOU TEACH APPRECIATION FOR OUR FLAG AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR.**

**FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE WHILE YOU WORE A MILITARY UNIFORM, AND FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE WHEN YOU DONNED THE BLUE CAP, I SALUTE YOU.**

**WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, I AM WORKING WITH ALL OF MY FELLOW GOVERNORS TO FORM A VETERANS' AGENDA FOR ALL FIFTY STATES.**

**HERE IN WISCONSIN, I AM PROUD TO SAY, WE HAVE  
A TIME HONORED TRADITION OF PROVIDING  
NUMEROUS BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR OUR  
STATE'S VETERANS.**

**AND WE ARE CONTINUING TO IMPROVE OUR  
VETERANS PROGRAMS THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF  
MY SECRETARY FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS, RAY  
BOLAND.**

**WE ARE BUILDING VETERANS LONG-TERM HEALTH  
CARE FACILITIES. WE ARE CONSTRUCTING NEW  
VETERANS CEMETERIES, AND PROVIDING MILITARY  
FUNERAL HONORS TO ALL VETERANS.**

**WE CONTINUE TO OFFER LOW INTEREST RATE  
HOME LOANS AND GRANTS FOR EDUCATION AND  
JOB TRAINING.**

**WE HAVE THE NATION'S BEST PROGRAM TO HELP  
HOMELESS VETERANS BECOME PRODUCTIVE  
CITIZENS OF THE NATION THEY ONCE DEFENDED.**

**WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MUCH, BUT WE HAVE  
MUCH MORE TO DO.**

**WE CAN REACH OUR LOFTY GOALS BECAUSE OF  
ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE AMERICAN LEGION, AND  
VETERANS LIKE YOU.**

**WHEN CALLED TO SERVE, YOU TOOK A SOLEMN  
OATH.**

**YOU PLEDGED TO GIVE YOUR OWN LIFE IF  
NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF YOUR  
FELLOW CITIZENS AND FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLE  
EVERYWHERE. THAT EXPERIENCE TAUGHT YOU TO  
UNDERSTAND WHY FREEDOM IS SO IMPORTANT.**

**YOU SAW FRIENDS GIVE THEIR LIVES ON  
BATTLEFIELDS AROUND THE WORLD, WHILE  
FIGHTING TO PRESERVE THE IDEALS OF THIS  
GREAT COUNTRY.**

**WE MUST TAKE A MOMENT TO CELEBRATE OUR  
FALLEN HEROES.**

**AS GENERAL GEORGE PATTON SAID, "IT IS  
FOOLISH AND WRONG TO MOURN THE MEN WHO  
DIED. RATHER, WE SHOULD THANK GOD THAT  
SUCH MEN LIVED."**

**THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES WOULD BE PROUD  
OF THE WORK YOU HAVE DONE ... TO CONTINUE TO  
FIGHT FOR THE CAUSE THEY GAVE THEIR LAST  
BREATH TRYING TO DEFEND.**

**NOW, YOU WORK TIRELESSLY ON BEHALF OF  
YOUR FELLOW VETERANS AND YOUR  
COMMUNITIES.**

**BECAUSE OF YOU ... WHAT YOU DID YEARS AGO,  
AND WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW ... WE ARE A  
BETTER NATION, AND A BETTER WORLD.**



**GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU. GOD BLESS THE  
AMERICAN LEGION. AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.  
THANK YOU.**

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