

Memorial Day.

Although this is the weekend that most will celebrate as the official kick off of summer - to many it's a very somber day. This holiday was specifically created to honor all of the members of our military who gave the ultimate sacrifice during military conflict. All totaled throughout any military conflict in U.S. History just under one million have perished. (https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf) While we can summarize which conflict caused the most I'd prefer to concentrate on one – each one. You see we live in the greatest experiment in political history. A country where every single citizen has rights and liberties. And we as a country, as divisive as we can be amongst ourselves, our citizens will give their lives to protect those freedoms. There are countries, religions, dictators and zealots who would love to see this great nation of ours destroyed. Truth is they just don't get it. You see you can bomb Pearl Harbor, or destroy the World Trade Center, and just like any challenge to our values and beliefs those events steel our wills and strengthen our resolve to fight even more to protect this great country of ours. We thank every veteran who has served in any capacity – after all they are all part of the greatest protective force ever assembled. But we would most like to honor those military men and women who lost their lives in service protecting each of us. Without them we would certainly not be who we are today. THANK YOU!!!

During this week leading up to this hallowed holiday this past Monday I had the honor of attending one of my nephews graduation ceremonies from Pitt Medical School. It was appropriately held at Soldiers and Sailors Hall in Oakland. I forgot what a honorable place this is – right here in our own community. It's really quite majestic. And there on the wall – some 50 feet tall are 272 of the most powerful words ever written – it starts with this profound sentence: "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm . I find it ironic that we are the only country – in all of recorded history – that believes that. A lot of other countries espouse freedom and liberties, none have built their entire governance around these core values. If you haven't read this great missive recently I thought I'd share it with you again. Think about this each and every time you see a veteran or a current service member.

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

With greatest admiration and respect – Happy Memorial Day!

Dave