

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

The President's Weekly Address

May 28, 2016

Hi, everybody. Right now there are American troops serving in harm's way and standing sentry around the world. There are veterans who have served honorably in times of war and peace and often came home bearing the invisible and visible wounds of war. They may not speak the loudest about their patriotism; they let their actions do that. And the right time to think of these men and women, and thank them for their service and sacrifice, is every day of the year.

Memorial Day, which we'll observe Monday, is different. It's the day we remember those who never made it home, those who never had the chance to take off the uniform and be honored as a veteran. It's the day we stop to reflect with gratitude on the sacrifice of generations who made us more prosperous and free and to think of the loved ones they left behind. Remembering them—searing their stories and their contributions into our collective memory—that's an awesome responsibility. It's one that all of us share as citizens.

As Commander in Chief, I have no more solemn obligation than leading our men and women in uniform: making sure they have what they need to succeed, making sure we only send them into harm's way when it's absolutely necessary. And if they make the ultimate sacrifice—if they give their very lives—we have to do more than honor their memory.

We have to be there for their families. Over the years, Michelle and I have spent quiet moments with the families of the fallen—husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. They've shared their pain, but also their pride in the sacrifices their loved ones made under our proud flag.

It's up to the rest of us to live our lives in a way that's worthy of these sacrifices. The idea to set aside a Memorial Day each year didn't come from our Government, it came from ordinary citizens who acknowledged that while we can't build monuments to every heroic act of every warrior we lost in battle, we can keep their memories alive by taking one day out of the year to decorate the places where they're buried.

That's something that so many of our fellow Americans are doing this weekend: remembering. Remembering the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen who died in our defense. Remembering those who remain missing. Remembering that they were our fellow citizens and churchgoers, classmates and children, and more often than not, the best of us.

So this Memorial weekend, I hope you'll join me in acts of remembrance. Lay a flower or plant a flag at a fallen hero's final resting place. Reach out to a Gold Star family in your community and listen to the story they have to tell. Send a care package to our troops overseas, volunteer to make a wounded warrior's day a little easier. Or hire a veteran who is ready and willing to serve at home just as they did abroad. Or just pause, take a moment, and offer a silent word of prayer or a public word of thanks.

The debt we owe our fallen heroes is one we can never truly repay. But our responsibility to remember is something we can live up to every day of the year.

Thanks. May God watch over our fallen heroes and their families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on May 19 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on May 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 27, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 28. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Obama, Michelle.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: POW/MIA remains, recovery efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Holidays and special observances : Memorial Day.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600360.