

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018*

## **Remarks at a Reception for the Congressional Medal of Honor Society**

*September 12, 2018*

*The President.* Thank you very much, everybody. Please, please. A lot of very brave people in this room. I have to start off by saying that. And I'm truly thrilled to welcome back all of you folks to the White House. Thirty-three recipients, our Nation's highest military award: the congressional Medal of Honor.

You know, now they say the Medal of Honor. Am I wrong in saying that it just sounds better when you say the "congressional Medal of Honor"? Somehow, it's just a very special—a very special thing, a very special group of people.

Nearly half of the Nation's 72 living recipients are here with us tonight. So you have 72 total recipients living, and we have half tonight. And I feel I know you. Most of you I've met, right? More than once. Each of you went above and beyond the call of duty. Each of you risked life and limb, without a thought for your own safety. Each of you has made a lasting mark upon the history of our great Nation.

The congressional Medal of Honor is the supreme symbol of American courage. It is the ultimate tribute to American valor. You are the strongest, the bravest, and the finest among us. See? My ego is not that big. *[Laughter]* I admit it. I admit it. Okay? Right, General? I admit it. It's true. And we thank God that you were there in America's hour of need.

We will all honor Medal of Honor winners and recipients, and we'll always do that. And to be here tonight with you is very, very special. I want to thank you all for coming to the White House. We have some tremendous people that are paying great respect to you in this room, other than our Medal of Honor winners. We have some tremendous people, highly respected. And they all wanted to be here.

So I'd like to ask, if I might, for the winners of the congressional Medal of Honor to please stand. Thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you very much. That's really something.

### *Hurricane Florence Preparedness Efforts*

Before continuing, I'd like to provide an update on our preparations for the incoming hurricanes. We have some really big situation confronting us. It's coming in fairly fast. And it's going to be one of the biggest to ever hit the East Coast, one of the biggest to ever hit our country. Maybe something will happen, but it's looking that like that probably won't be taking place, unfortunately, meaning veering away from land.

My administration is in close coordination with State and local authorities. And FEMA—these are tremendous people, also, as you know—has already placed extensive resources on the ground, including search-and-rescue experts, power restoration, and medical support. Tremendous people working on the hurricane: first responders, law enforcement, and FEMA. And they're all ready, and we're getting tremendous accolades from politicians and the people. We are ready. But this is going to be one of the biggest ones to ever hit our country.

Residents in the path of these devastating storms should comply with all evacuation orders and other emergency instructions. Protection of life is the absolute highest priority. And that's what we're doing. It's called protection of life. So God bless everybody, and be careful. Thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you.

### *Reception for the Congressional Medal of Honor Society*

For tonight's Medal of Honor reception, we're also joined by members of my Cabinet: Secretaries Steve Mnuchin. Steve, where are you, Steve? I don't know if you'd ever win this award, Steve. *[Laughter]* It's—that's a tough award. In a different way, right? In a different way. Doing a great job. Thank you. Ryan Zinke. Ryan? Thank you very much. Sonny Perdue. Sonny? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Sonny. Alex Acosta. Alex? Thank you. Thank you, Alex. Ben Carson. Thank you, Ben. Thank you. Elaine Chao. How's Transportation doing? Good? I think so.

Robert Wilkie, doing a great job for the VA. We're doing a great job. We have choice, and we have accountability—things that nobody ever thought you'd see. They worked 46, 47 years on trying to get Veterans Choice. And we now have Veterans Choice and we have accountability. If they don't do the job, boom, you're fired. *[Laughter]* We want that for our veterans, right? Right?

And a man who's really doing a fantastic job, Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler. Thank you. Thank you, Andrew. Thank you, Andrew. Appreciate it.

We're grateful to the distinguished military leaders in attendance, including Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Richard. Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson. Thank you. Thank you, Heather. And Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Paul Selva. Thank you, Paul. Thank you very much.

And one of my favorite members of the Joint Chief. They—stand up you two. What a job. Two of you. Come one. Stand up. Right? Great. Thank you both. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Paul.

I also want to thank Representative Mo Brooks for joining us tonight. Great gentleman—wherever you are, Mo. Thank you, Mo. And a very special thank you to the members of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

Tonight we're privileged to be in the company of America's greatest heroes. Joining us this evening are three extraordinary Americans who I had the privilege of presenting the Medal of Honor to: Jim McCloughan, Mike Rose, and Britt Slabinski. Please stand up. Please. Please. Thank you. Thank you, fellas. Proud of you.

We also are very proud to have among us a marine who served in World War II and who fought heroically at Iwo Jima. In just a few weeks, he will celebrate his 95th birthday. He's a friend of mine. I've gotten to know him. Woody Williams. Woody. Ninety-five. You look good, Woody. You look good.

Another friend of mine, General John Kelly and his incredible wife Karen. They're here someplace. John? Stand up, John. Stand up, Karen. Two great people. Two great people.

I also want to say a word of warmth and love to the spouses and the loved ones here tonight. We know that the courage of our warriors is sustained by that great love and support and sacrifice of our military families. Without those great families, it would never be the same. And we all understand that. All of the recipients understand that, I know. So I thank you all for being here, and thank you for your tremendous support. Thank you.

The congressional Medal of Honor recipients here with us tonight come with and from cities and towns all across our Nation, and they fought for America in fields of battle all across the world.

In Vietnam, Bruce Crandall flew a helicopter, full speed ahead, straight into enemy fire—and it was a lot of fire, from what I understand, Bruce—not once, not twice, but 22 times. Bruce, you can have that job, okay? *[Laughter]* Where's Bruce? Bruce. Thank you, Bruce. Twenty-two times. Ben Carson, better him than us, right? Huh? *[Laughter]*

In Korea, Hiroshi Miyamura singlehandedly battled an overwhelming number of enemy fighters without reinforcements. They didn't come. They weren't there. He treated the wounded and kept on fighting while enduring severe wounds of his own. Where is he? Where is he? Please.

In Afghanistan, Ed Byers rescued a hostage from terrorists, tackled a guard in hand-to-hand combat, and shielded the hostage from enemy rounds.

Every single recipient here this evening has acted with heroism beyond description, and courage beyond measure. Tremendous courage. You inspire dread in our enemies, awe in our friends, and universal admiration among freedom-loving people all around the world. They respect you so much—more than you would even know.

I know that tonight you are also thinking of your fellow warriors who didn't come home. Many, many warriors did not come home. We forever remember and eternally honor America's fallen heroes.

The warriors with us today continue to give of themselves long after leaving active service. One of them is Sammy Davis. I know Sammy Davis, but it's a different Sammy Davis. *[Laughter]* Good name. Where's Sammy? Sammy. Sammy. Now I know two of you. Thank you, Sammy.

*Medal of Honor recipient Sammy L. Davis.* I know several guys named Davis.

*The President.* That's—*[laughter]*—that's true, actually, isn't it? *[Laughter]*

Who earned the congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Vietnam. Sammy teaches young people about the importance of patriotism. And just a few months ago, he received the State of Indiana's most prestigious award for his life of service. Sammy, that's fantastic. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Also with us is Ronald Rosser, who fought in Korea, and then became a police chief, a construction foreman, and a history teacher.

A veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, Leroy Petry has since devoted his life to supporting our wonderful veterans. Thank you very much. We have many people that are doing that.

We're loving our veterans, I think, honestly, more than ever before. We respect them so much. There's a whole different spirit over our country. We respect our veterans more than we've ever respected our veterans. So important. We're working so hard on that, and we're doing the job.

These are just a few of the incredible stories represented in this room today.

Before I conclude, I would like to ask the president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society to come up and say a few words—a friend of mine, and we've met a number of times. And he's a good man and a little bit of a character, and that's okay. I suspect you're all characters. *[Laughter]* Please come up, recipient Drew Dix.

*Congressional Medal of Honor Society President Drew D. Dix.* Thank you, President Trump for two things. One is honoring us with this invitation to the White House. You know, January next year, it's been 50 years since I was in the East Room. And I don't remember much about that. It was much of a fog in my mind because of the circumstances. But I want to tell you that, on behalf of the 32 other recipients here, we are very honored to be here.

But that honor pales in comparison to the honor that we have, and the responsibility that we share, for representing all of our veterans and servicemembers that performed deeds far greater than ours. But witnesses just aren't available.

And for that, I want to say that we carry that around the country. We do what we can to spread the character and the examples of recipients to our youth. And we're just starting a new program on our outreach, and we help to coordinate efforts between—all the efforts—to coordinate the efforts against—preventing the suicides. It's a tremendous problem in our country. So the Society has taken this on.

And I can't think of a better way to start a convention as right here from the White House and going over to Annapolis. So if we're all about—and if we're all about tradition, tradition starts here. And for the Navy folks, we're really proud to spend a week with the midshipmen over there.

And thank you, sir, for all you do.

*The President.* Great honor. Thank you, Drew, very much. Thank you. Thank you, Drew.

The heroes in this room embody the highest ideals of our Nation. Your actions demonstrate the unmatched nobility and dignity of the American warrior. And that's what you are. You're warriors. Great warriors.

You inspire in each of us the greatest sense of patriotism, and purpose, and pride. We pledge to honor your service by supporting. And when I say "support," I mean always supporting the incredible men and women of the United States military.

We will always remain faithful to the heroes of the American Armed Forces. We will forever remain loyal to our beloved veterans. And we will always defend our country, our Constitution, our values, our families, our freedom, our people, and we will always defend our great American flag.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Andrew R. Wheeler; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; and White House Chief Staff John F. Kelly.

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