

May 28 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Joyce Martinez, wife of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel R. Martinez; Jeni Cook, Director of Chaplain Services, Department of Veterans Affairs; former Senator Bob Dole, national chairman, and Frederick W. Smith, cochairman, World War II Memorial Campaign; and Elizabeth Dole, former Secretary of Transportation. Following his remarks, the President signed

H.R. 1696, to expedite the construction of the World War II Memorial, which was assigned Public Law No. 107–11. The Memorial Day proclamation of May 25 and the Executive order of May 28 on the President’s Task Force To Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation’s Veterans are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Expedite the Construction of the World War II Memorial

May 28, 2001

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1696, a bill to expedite the construction of the World War II memorial in the District of Columbia. It is indeed fitting that this measure becomes law on Memorial Day.

This legislation will allow the Nation to express the appreciation due the World War II generation for their selfless sacrifices that preserved the freedoms we all enjoy. I commend the Congress for a truly bipartisan effort to expedite construction of the memorial.

Now that debate over the site and basic design is concluded, the time has come for

all concerned with the creation of the memorial to act with the same determination and sense of common purpose so wonderfully displayed by those we honor. We must get the job done, so that those who served are able to see the Nation’s permanent expression of remembrance and thanks.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 28, 2001.

NOTE: H.R. 1696, approved May 28, was assigned Public Law No. 107–11.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia

May 28, 2001

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for those kind remarks. Secretary Principi, General Shelton, and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jackson, members of the Cabinet, Members of the United States Congress, honored guests. We have a lot of generations represented here today. But I would like for what’s now called the “Greatest Generation” to please stand with those who served in World War II, their

widows, World War II orphans. Please rise. [*Applause*]

My fellow Americans, a few moments ago, for the first time as President, I paid tribute at this tomb where American soldiers were laid to rest. Their names are known only to God, but there is much we do know about them and about all the others we remember today. We know that they all loved their lives as we love ours. We

know they had a place in the world, families waiting for them, and friends they expected to see again. We know that they thought of a future, just as we do, with plans and hopes for a long and full life. And we know that they left those hopes behind when they went to war and parted with them forever when they died.

Every Memorial Day we try to grasp the extent of this loss and the meaning of this sacrifice. And it always seems more than words can convey. All we can do is remember and always appreciate the price that was paid for our own lives and for our own freedom.

Today, in thousands of towns across this great land, Americans are gathered to pay their own tributes. At 3 o'clock this afternoon Americans will pause for a moment of remembrance. They will meet at monuments or in public squares or, like us, in places where those we honor were laid to rest.

More than any words we say, the truth is told in the things we see, in markers, in dates, in names around us. Some of the names here at Arlington are written large in our history: President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert; General George C. Marshall; Second Lieutenant Audie Murphy of Kingston, Texas; General Chappy James; Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., of the Union Army; Captain Robert Todd Lincoln; Generals Bradley and Pershing; Admirals Leahy and Rickover; and three of the men who planted the flag at Iwo Jima. These men were known for their wartime service and also for the lives they lived afterward.

For many, however, the afterward never came. Within these 200 acres are the remains of men and women who died young, some very young. Walking along these paths, a visitor to this national cemetery might view these markers as one great national loss, and that is certainly the case. But we must remember, for many who come here, there is one marker that will

always stand out among all the others. In their eyes, it lies alone.

For one woman, Memorial Day brings thoughts of the father she never knew. She recalled as, a young child, learning to pray the words "Our Father, who art in heaven," thinking she was talking to her own father.

For others, there is the memory of the last kiss as the train pulled away, a last wink and parting wisecrack from a big brother, a brave smile from a son who seemed like a boy. And then there was the telegram that came.

To those who have known that loss and felt that absence, Memorial Day gives formal expression to a very personal experience. Their losses can be marked but not measured. We can never measure the full value of what was gained in their sacrifice. We live it every day in the comforts of peace and the gifts of freedom. These have all been purchased for us.

From the very beginning, our country has faced many tests of courage. Our answer to such tests can be found here on these hills and in America's cemeteries, from the islands of the Pacific to the north coast of France.

And on Memorial Day, we must remember a special group of veterans, Americans still missing and unaccounted for from Vietnam, Korea, the cold war, and World War II. We honor them today. They deserve and will have our best efforts to achieve the fullest possible accounting and, alive or dead, to return them home to America.

It is not in our nature to seek out wars and conflicts. But whenever they have come, when adversaries have left us no alternative, American men and women have stood ready to take the risks and to pay the ultimate price. People of the same caliber and the same character today fill the ranks of the Armed Forces of the United States. Any foe who might ever challenge our national resolve would be repeating the grave errors of defeated enemies. Because this Nation loves peace, we do not take it for granted. Because we love freedom,

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we are always prepared to bear even its greatest costs.

Arriving here today, all of us passed the strong, straight figures of men and women who serve our country today. To see their youth and discipline and clarity of purpose is humbling to a Commander in Chief. They are the new generation of America's defenders. They follow an unbroken line of good and brave and unfaltering people who have never let this country down.

Today we honor those who fell from the line, who left us, never knowing how much they would be missed. We pray for them

with an affection that grows deeper with the years. And we remember them, all of them, with the love of a grateful Nation.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. James T. Jackson, USA, Commanding General, Military District of Washington. The Memorial Day proclamation of May 25 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Commemoration in Mesa, Arizona *May 28, 2001*

Thank you all very much. Secretary Principi, thank you for agreeing to serve our Nation. Thank you for your vision and hard work to make sure that those who have worn the uniform receive the benefits that they are owed. Principi is a good man who is going to do a fine job on behalf of the American people.

I'm honored to be here with my friend the Governor of the State of Arizona, Jane Dee Hull; Senator Jon Kyl from the great State of Arizona; Congressman Bob Stump, the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee; J.D. Hayworth; and the Congressman from this district, Jeff Flake.

It's an honor to be here with the commanders of Arizona's military bases. I'm pleased to be here with the distinguished guests on the stage. There's one special American here today, a man named Tom Lockhart, who was a captain in the United States Air Force, who had the dubious distinction of trying to teach me how to fly a T-38 aircraft at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. And I'm so honored my friend, Silver Star winner Tom Lockhart, is with us today as well.

Before I begin, I do want to ask us to join in a moment of silence for a veteran who passed away today, the Congressman from the State of Massachusetts, Congressman Joe Moakley. Please join me in a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

Thank you very much. Joe loved America, and he will be sorely missed.

Today's the day we say thanks to many heroes. There's a true hero who is a Senator from the State of Arizona. He is overseas today, but I know you all join me in thanking John McCain for his service, not only to Arizona but to the United States of America. And no President can pass through Arizona without remembering the great Arizona statesman who left us 3 years ago, Senator and Major General Barry Goldwater.

I want to thank you all for coming out. I am so pleased that so many of your citizens lined the streets and came into this hangar on this kind of warm Arizona day.
[Laughter]

I began this day with a group of veterans at the White House by signing into law