

2020 VETERANS DAY SPEECH

Good morning, welcome to Portsmouth, RI and our ceremony to honor our Veterans. My name is Francis "Cisco" Gutierrez Commander of American Legion Post 18. I am happy to be here to say a few words about Veterans Day and our yearly celebration. Please join me and Chaplain Dave Duggan for our opening benediction. Traditionally, the Boy Scouts present our colors at this time. Please remember the Boy Scouts as we work through these temporary directives. Directing your attention to our flag, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. At this point in our program, we would have the PHS music department perform our National Anthem. For many years, Portsmouth American Legion Post 18 has hosted this Veterans day memorial. Historically, we would meet in the Town Council chambers for an indoor portion of our program. This year we are remembering these Veterans outdoors following our Governors orders. Any of you who have participated in the past know that this community has consistently supported this day with packed standing-room-only crowds. Thank you to all of you who chose to be here this morning. The Covid-19 lockdown orders and restrictions are impacting almost every aspect of our daily lives. The restrictions and mask mandates may be controversial, but as supporters of law and order, we must show our support for our leaders. Today we gather to show honor to and respect for all veterans. Since the beginning of our great country, men and women have served in our national defense in wars both domestic and abroad. Each of these individuals pledged to defend our Constitutional Republic with their lives if asked. Fortunately for us here today we were not asked to give everything. The American Legion, one of the largest veterans service organizations, is still just one of many. Portsmouth Post 18 is honored to be here today to recognize our local heroes from all conflicts and the periods in-between. We want to show appreciation for All Veterans. Many military heroes go unrecognized during times of relative peace. It is also these Veterans we honor today. The myriad of job descriptions that encompass the greatest military on Earth require unique and diversified occupational specialities. As servicemen leave active duty they can become essential workers in their communities. When given the opportunity, recently discharged Veterans bring valuable training and experience to their employers. Consider hiring a vet for your next job opening. Today is a day to celebrate. We are grateful for our country. Our efforts shape

future generations of Veterans. Some seasoned military alumni will agree that "peacetime" service can be as difficult as wartime operations. We must always remain diligent in our duties, while maintaining a strong Americanism. This may be achieved by a continuously strong national defense, cherishing our freedoms and liberty. Please direct your attention to the beautiful wreath laid today here in Legion Park. Carolyn Evers Carbery makes a wreath every year for this program. She is not with us today for pandemic preventive reasons. Please remember her for all she does year round for the Veteran community. The wreath is a symbol of honor, respect, and remembrance. It's circular form represents never ending unity. It also suggests that, like a recycling symbol, the cycle of life is perpetual. Other elements of the wreath, the evergreen branches, any decorations and other features have special meanings to different people. Each element contributes to the whole. The circle represents the military's continuous service; the green branches the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and our Coast Guard protectors. The ornaments evidence of victories, red berries the blood spilled. The meaning of the wreath is up to each admirer. There appears to be very little universal agreement about these ornaments. One thing is sure, most people hang wreaths out of respect and honor. Please remember your veteran today. Thank them for their service. There was a time when our country wasn't so kind to veterans. What we do today may resonate positively with one child, student or citizen. Our Nation depends on our armed forces to maintain our freedom. Every veteran has a unique story. As advertised, it's an adventure. Normal peacetime operations can be hazardous. Even servicemen who never had to face combat can share exciting stories of their time in service. Tales of companions and comradeship that many never experience again. It is a lifetime memory. Today, I am grateful to be here, excited about the rest of the day, and hopeful for a better tomorrow. Thank you for attending this year's ceremony. I hope to see many of you next year, back inside. Have a wonderful day.