

9-11 Ceremony

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today during this solemn remembrance.

I draw humble inspiration from the men and women in uniform serving our military armed forces, and in our police and firefighters. I would like to thank everyone who is willing to go in harm's way for to protect our people, our way of life and our ideals of elective governance.

I was particularly proud but also a bit worried when our son Zach stayed in the Navy and made it a career because of 9-11. Chief Schneider has made 5 trips to the Middle East with a boots on the ground assignment in Afghanistan along with 4 Persian Gulf tours, 2 aboard the USS Cape St. George Guided Missile Cruiser (CG71) and one each with the USS Preble Guided Missile Destroyer and one with the USS John C. Stennis Nuclear powered aircraft carrier. Zach celebrated 20 years in the Navy last Saturday on duty in Sicily and will be home on leave in December. He is third generation Navy as my Dad was a Navy Chief in WW 2.

I would like to thank all of the Police and Firefighters who are here today and ask that anyone on active duty please be recognized alsoAnd now would anyone who ever wore a military, police or fire fighter uniform please stand and be recognized and thanked for your service.

We all remember where we were and how numb we felt exactly thirteen years ago on Sept 11, 2001 as we watched our nation under attack. We were attacked near the very birthplaces of our nation. There were attacks before on the USS Cole Guided Missile Destroyer, on our Marines in Lebanon and even on the World Trade Center several years earlier but nothing focused us on the threat posed by extremism and intolerance like the 9/11 attack and we embarked on an all-out worldwide war on all forms of terrorism. The mastermind of that day, Osama Bin Laden and many of his lieutenants are now dead but there will always be another madman to deal with in the world, be they a dictator in N Korea, Russia, China or someone who distorts faith into evil.

President George Washington, Father of our Nation, who symbolically put down his sword rather than become a tyrant, who took his Presidential oath in NY City, who also refused to be a President for life, who nurtured our infant confederation into the United States with an emphasis on UNITED and who was so singularly revered that our Nations' capital city is named after him and located near his beloved Mt. Vernon home. Both New York and Washington DC, both with fond ties to our beloved founding President were targeted on the day that changed the way we live in our world.

Our forefathers embraced a new approach to governance in the late 1700's and they took inspiration from the republican and democratic ideas of classical Greece and Rome. They created a passion for self-governance and they valued and debated the possibility that elected governance could provide freedoms and unlimited opportunities for mankind. In 5000 years of recorded history, democracy and republican elected governance is making the most of a second chance. The first chance died with the Totalitarian Roman Empire replacing the Republic of Rome in 27 BC and civilization waited 1800 years for a second chance which began in 1776.

The Eastern Seaboard then was the exciting cradle of brilliant new ideas that created a new age of elective government that has liberated us from tyranny so we can pursue happiness for ourselves and our children and for our fellow citizens of the world. We hold democracy dear in our collective soul and have encouraged its growth in all corners of the globe.

Elected Governance is not perfect, it continues to evolve and present challenges. We allow open debate which allows us to criticize our leaders. I receive my share of disagreement but I would go in harm's way again to defend my critic's right to speak. Ben Franklin worked hard to promote a system of merit that allows us to learn from mistakes and he believed that by embracing tolerance we become better citizens. President Lincoln said that Democracy is mankind's last great hope to avoid perpetual rule by tyrants.

Our most dangerous foe for the past 237 years has almost always been tyranny in one form or another. **Tyranny is the opposite of tolerance.** We have prevailed over Tyranny's Dictators who have embraced Monarchy, Fascism, Communism and Anarchism. Today we continue the process of standing up to Tyrants who embrace terrorism, intolerance, even barbarism and any other dastardly means to their evil ends. We will prevail, for we are a noble and loyal friend but as General Grant noted we have a proven ability to become a brutal and stubborn foe. Just ask any Soldier, Marine, Sailor, or Airman, they know what I'm talking about.

Today we remember those who perished thirteen years ago. We lost Mothers, Daughters, Wives, Granddaughters, Grandmothers, Great Granddaughters, Sisters, Sons, Fathers, Brothers, Grandsons, Grandfathers, Great Granddaughters, Cousins, Friends, Co-workers, Clients, Leaders, Heroes, great minds and all the good they had to offer their loved ones and mankind.

We lost Firefighters and Police officers and we thank everyone who has ever served in uniform and especially those who serve us now in our Police and Fire Departments and Emergency Management teams. We are blessed here in Florissant and in our surrounding communities to have dedicated, professional and courageous Police, Firefighters and emergency responders.

We salute all who ever served and pray for those who now go in harm's way in our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. We thank them all for being on the front lines to protect our Nation, the ideals of self-governance, and our pursuit of happiness then, now, and for generations to come.

We are fortunate in the Florissant Valley to have a long history with civil government that is even older than the constitution. We are blessed with the example of Saint Philippine Duchesne who told the Famous Pioneer Jesuit Peter DeSmet that she loved Florissant because it had the quality of hospitality. We have retained that quality with the French welcoming the Spanish and then the German and Irish and we have always and will always welcome anyone who wants to live a wholesome life in our valley.

As we reflect on the attack on our soil 13 years ago today let us resolve to focus on the progress of Democracy in the world, what is right here in America and what can all of us do to protect her and make her better and stronger. Let us focus on what is right with Missouri and the St. Louis Metro area and how we can embrace it and take advantage of our strengths. And let us remember what a beautiful Community we have here in the Florissant Valley and how much we love it and how proud we are to call it our home.

God blessed us with free will; we honor him by promoting freedom and equal opportunity in this world. May he bless everyone here and may God Bless the United States of America.