



## **AMERICAN PATRIOT SCHOLARSHIP**

### **My Message to U.S. Military and Veterans**

To the brave men and women who have stood at the gates of freedom, who have faced the unknown with unwavering courage, who have sacrificed time, family, and pieces of themselves for a nation that they will never fully know, I write to you with gratitude that words cannot fully contain.

You have faced horrors that most cannot fathom, yet you have endured. You have carried the weight of duty, knowing that your sacrifice is not just a footnote in history, but the foundation of the liberties we so freely enjoy. Because of you, children wake up in safety, families sit together in peace, and our voices echo through a nation built on the promise of freedom.

I remember as a child, watching the evening news with my father, seeing soldiers return home. One image will forever stay with me, a young daughter running across an airport terminal, leaping into her father's arms after a year-long deployment. In that moment, I began to understand what it means to sacrifice not just yourself, but precious time that can never be reclaimed. For every holiday missed, every birthday celebrated over a grainy video call, every first step not witnessed, I am profoundly thankful. These quiet sacrifices often go unacknowledged, yet they shape the very fabric of our nation's resilience.

There is a story that has haunted me since I first learned it, evidence to the unbreakable spirit of a soldier. In the chaos of war, a young Marine, barely out of his twenties, was caught in

the firestorm of battle. The explosion ripped through the earth beneath him, and in an instant, his leg was gone. He fell, his body failing him, but his spirit, his duty, did not. With blood soaking the sand beneath him, he forced himself forward, dragging the weight of his shattered body because surrender was never an option. His comrades carried him home, but even without a limb, he stood once more. His fight did not end on the battlefield. He fought in the hospital, in the long nights of recovery, in the war within himself. And still, he refused to surrender.

Your sacrifices have been seen constantly through history, none more than those like Senator John McCain, who endured years of torment in the darkness of a Hanoi prison. Captured, broken, and beaten, he was offered a way out, a chance to escape the nightmare, but he refused. He stayed, because to leave before his brothers was unthinkable. He endured pain beyond comprehension, because duty was more than just a word to him. It was his soul. I often think about the weight of the decisions you've made, signing your name on that line, knowing it might cost everything. I think about the family dinners interrupted by deployment orders, the wedding dates postponed indefinitely, the children born while you were oceans away. I think about how you stood guard in foreign lands while the rest of us slept peacefully, unaware of the dangers you were facing on our behalf. This willingness to place yourself between harm and home is a debt I can never repay but will forever acknowledge with the deepest respect and gratitude.

There is no reward on this earth that can ever equal what you have given. You have spent sleepless nights wondering if you would ever return home. You have watched as the world carried on, unaware of the battles you fought in the shadows. You have buried brothers, held the hands of the fallen, and carried wounds that will never fully heal.

In Matthew 5:9, it is written: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." If ever there were peacemakers in this world, it is you. You have walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and still, you stood. You have placed the weight of this nation upon your shoulders, knowing that the burdens are great, but the cause is greater.

I am most thankful for the gift of perspective your service has given us all, the understanding that freedom isn't free, that democracy requires vigilance, and that some things are worth fighting for, no matter the cost. When I stand for the national anthem, when I see our flag waving against a blue sky, I feel a sting of tears knowing the blood and sacrifice each thread represents. Your courage reminds us that in a world of self-interest, there still exist those willing to give everything for something greater than themselves.

And so, I say to you: your sacrifice is not in vain. Your risks are worth it. You have defended a nation that still believes in the dream of freedom, that still carries the hope of something greater. Because of you, democracy breathes. Because of you, the stars and stripes still rise with the morning sun.

You are not forgotten.

You are the heartbeat of this nation.

You are the reason we are free.

And though these words may never be enough, please know that there are those of us who will spend our lives trying to be worthy of what you have given. We will remember. We will honor. We will ensure that your sacrifice was not made in darkness, but in the bright light of a grateful nation that will never, ever forget.



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As a citizen of the United States, I am personally thankful for our veterans, as I understand the unique freedoms we have as citizens of this great country. Veterans of today and for the last half century were not drafted and specifically chose to go out of their way to serve their country in places like Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq in periods where it stopped being the norm to serve your country. Originally, starting with what the Vietnam veterans of the late 1960s and early 1970s faced after they returned home and received low recognition for their services, and even condemnation for the hardship they faced. Despite their hardships, they protect our freedoms and liberties, as many bad operators across the world would like to destroy America and destroy the exceptionalism that America represents. Our veterans, for centuries, have protected important rights that America's pragmatic Founding Fathers articulated like those enshrined in the 1st Amendment: the freedoms of speech, assembly, petition, press, and, lastly, religion. No less important are the rights expounded in the next nine amendments of the Bill of Rights. From the right to bear arms to protections against unjust imprisonment, our Constitution is the document that establishes the greatest government humanity has ever produced since the concept of government originated five thousand years ago. Our veterans show incredible courage and endure privations that are hardly ever experienced in our society to ensure these rights endure.

Since the close of the Vietnam War, we have relied on men and women who choose to serve and are not conscripted, as was the case for much of the twentieth century. They put their lives on the line to protect concepts and to maintain America's position as the guarantor of freedom and stability throughout the world. Even our allies frequently shirk their duties, knowing that American men and women will be stationed throughout the world or ready for deployment in a hostile environment at a moment's notice. All this while, literally 99% of America's citizens get to go about their daily routines with many having little thought about what it means to give oneself over to a cause larger than oneself and immediate convenience. Even in times of peace, soldiers face dangers and sacrifice personal comfort, which is different from the normal occupation, like the soldiers who died in Lithuania last month after a training exercise.

Ultimately, it is hard to overstate what veterans do for this country as they defend our way of life against a long list of many foes like China, Iran, and Russia, or terrorists in the Middle East like the Taliban or Al-Qeda, and most currently, the Houthis in the Red Sea. The sacrifice is worth the risk as America is a unique country that is worth defending, and many men and women have died in wars to protect this country from enemies throughout the years, both foreign and domestic, and deserved to be rewarded with praise and clear recognition from the public that their service was worth it. That is why I would like to thank the veterans who serve and have served my country.