



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Suggested Speech For Flag Day 2021

In 1974, the Watergate scandal and opposition to the Vietnam War had some Americans questioning the greatness of their country.

Johnny Cash was not one of them. An Air Force veteran, the country music star loved the American Flag. It was in this turbulent time that he released “Ragged Old Flag,” a song that would become a staple at his concerts.

Covering a wide history of American events from Francis Scott Key’s penning of the Star Spangled Banner through Vietnam, Cash’s closing lyrics were powerful:

*“Cause she’s been through the fire before
And I believe she can take a whole lot more
So we raise her up every morning
We take her down every night
We don’t let her touch the ground and we fold her up right
On second thought, I do like to brag
‘Cause I’m mighty proud of that ragged old flag.”*

Cash, like millions of American Legionnaires, understood that while the United States was not perfect, it still represented the best in humanity. When Key described the new nation as the “Land of the free and the home of the brave,” he could not have imagined that this would also be a country that would liberate so many others from tyranny.

Automobiles, airplanes, computers and even telephones were not on our founders’ radar screens – not surprising since radar screens didn’t exist yet.

Our nation's founders could not have dreamed that the United States would someday send men to the moon and back.

Yet the remarkable technological and industrial success that has blessed this nation is only possible because Americans have the freedom to dream.

Flag Day is a time when we reflect on the cherished red, white and blue cloth of our nation. Our blanket of freedom.

The Flag of the United States not only symbolizes what our country is, but more importantly, what it could be.

While many immigrants were inspired by the great lady in the harbor, considered to be the embodiment of liberty, it is the Stars & Stripes that is displayed in so many homes in neighborhoods throughout America. We see Old Glory flown proudly in front of businesses, outside of offices and in school yards every day.

The traditions of the United States include helping others, whether they be part of our immediate neighborhood or members of the international community. From Bunker Hill to Baghdad, Americans have put their lives and limbs on the line to defend and protect those in need

When veterans do lose their lives, one need only look at their surviving next-of-kin to understand the significance of the flag under which they served. During a veterans' funeral, the folded triangle is usually warmly embraced by its grieving recipient. It is emblematic of the tri-cornered hats worn by America's original patriots. It is often passed down by generations of the veteran's survivors, protected by a glass display case.

An honor guard meticulously folds a flag thirteen times.

The first fold is a symbol of life.

The second is a symbol of the belief in eternal life.

The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing the ranks in defense of the country to attain peace throughout the world.

The fourth fold of a flag represents the weaker nature. As American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him that Americans turn in time of peace, as well as in time of war for His divine guidance.

The fifth fold is a tribute to the country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, ‘Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong.’”

The sixth fold is for where people’s hearts lie. It is with their heart that they “pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The seventh fold is a tribute to America’s Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that their country and its flag is protected against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of their republic.

The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.

The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood and mothers. For it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

The tenth fold is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of their country since they were first born.

The eleventh fold in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

The thirteenth fold, or when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our nation's motto, "In God we trust."

Twenty years ago, the flag captured a special place in the hearts of Americans, reeling from the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

It draped the caskets of many firefighters, police officers and other heroes who ran into burning buildings, while the natural human instinct would be to flee.

A large flag covered a bruised side of the Pentagon, acting as a temporary but soothing band-aid for the headquarters of a U.S. military that would respond gallantly.

In more recent times, contentious politics, racial strife and a global pandemic have brought enormous challenges to the land of the free. One need only to look at the flag of the United States to remember that America is up to the task. When tested, America always passes.

Thank you for being here. God bless you, God bless our flag and God bless America!