

## **Veteran's Day, 2014**

### **Remarks delivered by**

### **State Representative Ken Gordon**

It is an honor and a privilege to gather with you this morning to pay tribute to veterans from Bedford, from Massachusetts and from everywhere who stood up when standing up was the most difficult and brave thing to do.

Thank you to Paul Purchia for allowing me to address you today, and thank you to Margot Fleischman and the Bedford Selectmen and elected officials, John Hartmann, David Ganeto and Senator Barrett. Most of all, thank you to our veterans, our active military servicemen and women, and to our police and fire fighters.

Just last week you re-elected me to serve as your representative in the State House and I thank you for that. For that I am greatly humble. The night of that election I gathered with my supporters as the results came in at the American Legion in Burlington. The members of the Legion there and here in Bedford have a special place with me, and some, like Mike Runyan, Bobbie Ennis and others, know just how special that commitment runs. The legion posts are more than just halls. It is a place where our heroes gather. And so I was honored just minutes after the results came in when Curt Post invited me downstairs to say a few words to the veterans who were present there that night.

I often think about the words of Elmer Davis, the head of the War Information office during World War II, who said that "the nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave."

But you know, in the words of another wartime hero, former president John F. Kennedy, “We must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

So what have we done to live by them?

I was moved last month when I met a veteran at his home in Burlington. I started to talk to him about our election and he said, “stop right there. You’ve got my support. You’ve got it because of your vote for the Valor Act.” That act will help this veteran’s brothers and sisters returning from war find jobs, get training, and work on their homes. I am proud of that vote.

Massachusetts remains the number one state in providing veterans benefits. A study was done last year comparing state benefits in seven categories, including our commitment to veterans assistance in home placement, home ownership assistance, tax breaks, financial assistance, employment, training and business assistance. Massachusetts has the highest number of veterans assistance programs or benefits of any state in America. I will provide that study to Bill Linehan in Veterans Services so he can share it with all of you. But we can do more. Instances of PTSD and traumatic brain injury among veterans returning for Iraq and Afghanistan are real. We must address the needs of veterans who struggle when they return.

While the veteran I met in Burlington thanked me for my support, we do not do it for the thanks, we do it because it is the right thing to do.

There is a poem that is quoted often on this day of the year, called “It is the Veteran”. Its author is unknown, and maybe its better that way, because its words belong to all of us. This is especially meaningful to me, your state representative, a lawyer and a former journalist. Because all of these roles are called out, and it reminds me that anything I have

accomplished could not have been done without the sacrifice of our veterans.

It goes in part like this:

It is the Veteran, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the Veteran, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the Veteran, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the Veteran, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the Veteran, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the Veteran, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

And so we take time out of our lives, today, to honor our veterans. We think of the service of our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our uncles, aunts and friends. We remember those who served in the European theater, in Korea like my step-father, and in Vietnam like my uncles. Those who fought in Southeast Asia did not receive the welcome they deserve and still, the plight of remaining MIAs must be addressed. We must continue to honor them. We remember those who served in more recent conflicts in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East and we in government must work hard to be sure we honor our commitment to them, just as they honored their commitment to us.

From the beginning of our nation, George Washington wrote, “The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation. And in the last century former Massachusetts Governor, U.S. President and state representative Calvin Coolidge said, “the nation that forgets its defenders will itself be forgotten.”

We think about the loss of Bedford's John Daniel Hart, PFC, and Lance Corporal Travis Desiato (USMC), who lost their lives in Iraq.

And so here in Bedford we will continue to Support our Troops, as we always have. We will support those who are stationed at Hanscom field, and reach out to them when we see them to make their lives a little easier. And thank them for their service.

Thank you for allowing me to share this important ceremony with you.