

Kenneth Gordon

Bedford's Representative
in the Great and General Court



THE CENTENARY OF ARMISTICE DAY
NOVEMBER 11, 1918 TO NOVEMBER 11, 2018

Good Morning. Thank you Paul Purchia and the Patriotic Holiday Committee for providing me the opportunity to speak to this distinguished group. It is a privilege speak on behalf of myself and my colleague in the legislature, Senator Mike Barrett, and to join Bedford Selectmen Ed Pierce, Mike Rosenberg, Caroline Fedele, Margot Fleischman and Bill Moonan, Veterans Services Officer Bill Lennehan and other distinguished guests. I am honored to stand with the residents of the Bedford Green. I am honored to stand with those who are serving at Hanscom AFB, many of them far from home. I am honored have the safety of the first responders, our police and fire officials who have our backs today. Thank you all for the opportunity to pay tribute to those who served our country.

Today, we gather to honor veterans from Bedford, from the Commonwealth, and from around the United States. These brave men and women defended our freedoms and our way of life; they are why I was protected by the Freedom of the Press when I was a newspaper reporter, why I am able to obtain due process for people in my role as a lawyer, and why I am able to serve as a Representative in the Massachusetts Legislature.

It is with pride and gratitude that I thank you for your service, and to those returning from areas of conflict – no matter how long you have served or how long you have been back – welcome home. I point out a special welcome to my mother, Sue Levine, who has come from Florida to brave our cold weather, and is thinking of her husband Richard, an Air Force and Army Veteran from the Korean Conflict who is at home dealing with health issues.

Expressions of gratitude and symbols of our patriotism are important, but the true measure of our society is how we support our veterans and our servicemen, not just with words but with deeds. 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.”

Here in Massachusetts, by all measures, we are considered a leader in the veterans services we provide. This is the only state where every community has access to a Veterans Services Officer. Bill Linnehan and Gina Rada do such a wonderful job for us here in Bedford. In the brief six years since I have been serving as your Representative in the legislature, we have

passed laws that extend protection for Veterans at home and in the workplace and for their families.

I am especially proud that legislation that I filed and was signed into law by the Governor this past summer creating a paid Family and Medical Leave insurance program will allow families of service members to take time from work to care for an ill or injured hero returning from active duty. It will do so in a way that will not cost the employer additional expense.

This past year, I was proud to have joined with my colleagues in the legislature, including Senator Barrett, to pass the Brave Act, that provides increase access to certain real estate tax credits and deductions for our veterans and their families. We establish a network of lawyers who are willing to provide certain advice to veterans, free of charge. We will increase access to mental health treatment for those who served our country. And we are looking into the feasibility of providing tuition-free public higher education for our veterans. We will continue to find ways for our veterans to know that we appreciate your service and will never forget it.

This year we recognize the 100th anniversary of the cease fire that ended World War I, which occurred on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918.

World War I carries with it lessons that live on to this day. Beginning just 50 years after America took such losses in its own Civil War, we were reluctant to become involved in a conflict in Europe. However, as the war dragged on, we realized that the world's problems were our problems. We could not safely trade in Europe, and our citizens were not safe. When the RMS Lusitania was sunk by a German U-Boat with 120 Americans on board, it became apparent that peace for our nation could not occur until we found peace for all nations.

Woodrow Wilson offered these words at the conclusion of that Great War: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with a solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

We can never allow ourselves to forget the contribution of veterans to our society, it is because of their commitment that America has become a world leader. Today we take an important pause to remember their sacrifice. Let's make every day Veterans Day and never forget what our service members have done and were willing to do to protect us.