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Veterans Day 2003 Recognition Statement “Thanking Our Veterans”

by

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Since the beginning of our great Nation, the freedom we experience has been dependent on the strong Veterans who have fought to protect us. We again find ourselves in turbulent times with the current situation in Iraq. We are reminded almost daily as we read the paper and listen to the news of the dedication, commitment, and sacrifice of the honorable men and women who are willing to pay the ultimate price to protect and serve our country. These brave warriors come from many diverse cultures within our Nation, but they serve for the same reason- to protect the rights and benefits that come with freedom and to defend the principles of democracy.

Eighty-four years ago, on November 10th, a truce was signed that ended World War I. We have celebrated Veteran’s Day ever since - honoring the courageous deeds of these men and women who serve. On Memorial Day we remember those who gave their lives to secure our way of life. Today on Veteran’s Day, we not only remember those who paid for our freedom with their life but also those who were willing to give their life. We remember those who have fought many years ago and we also think about the men and women who are continuing to fight even as you read this.

American Indians and Alaska Natives have had a long history of serving this country in many battles. Through every battle, every skirmish, every war, our American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans have proven their dedication and commitment to the strength and survival of our nation.

Veteran’s Day is a day to honor those who are serving and have served in our country’s military forces. Throughout the Indian Health Service we have been privileged to work alongside some of the Nation’s greatest Veterans and the privilege to provide care and comfort to Veterans who are our patients. I would like to encourage each of you to take time out on Veteran’s Day to help celebrate and honor these men and women and to personally say “thank you” for all that they have done and our doing to protect us.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to every Veteran in the Indian Health Service. I understand the sacrifices that many of you made to serve this great Nation and I will be forever grateful to each and every one of you.