



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of November 6, 2023 -- 'A time to remember veterans'

THOMAS F. O'MARA November 7, 2023

| ISSUE: **VETERANS DAY**



We still stand proud in local ceremonies around the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions to honor the sacrifices and the victories of our soldiers -- past, present, and future. In so doing, we reaffirm our pride in this nation's armed forces and, of course, we turn our thoughts and prayers to those young soldiers whom we've lost from here at home.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, **"A time to remember veterans"**

Let's start this week with a memory because, in the end, this week will be all about remembering.

With that in mind, I'll recall former President Ronald Reagan, on June 6, 1984, standing tall on a windswept promontory on the coast of France offering words to commemorate the 40th anniversary of D-Day: "We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free."

Always remember. Always be proud. Freedom. Travel through this region's individual communities and it's striking to reflect on the common landmarks that stand equally tall as reminders of the guiding principles and underlying strengths of our nation: town and village halls, county courthouses, churches, elementary schools, local public libraries. These fundamental American places still echo the very reasons for our nation's founding and her endurance as the world's great democracy.

Consequently, we can never forget the monuments and memorials that America's communities have built to honor our veterans. Indeed, there may be no more powerful or poignant landmarks anywhere and later this week, on Veterans Day, we will gather in many of these places to remember.

We'll be observing this year's Veterans Day with American troops still bravely engaged in the war against terrorism, and the fight for freedom and democracy across the globe. It will be observed at a time when the world's stage remains embroiled in uncertainty and instability. It truly is a momentous and dangerous time in world history and our annual tribute to veterans takes on many layers of meaning.

But most of all we still stand proud in local ceremonies around the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions to honor the sacrifices and the victories of our soldiers -- past, present, and future. In so doing, we reaffirm our pride in this nation's armed forces and, of course, we turn our thoughts and prayers to those young soldiers whom we've lost from here at home.

Since the tragic unfolding of Sept. 11, 2001, this generation has realized and continues to realize, all too painfully, that our freedom here at home can be threatened at any moment. We realize, as well, that our troops always stand ready to protect freedom again and again. The freedoms we cherish have been hard-won by the soldiers of previous generations and by those of this generation who have continued to serve. They are true American heroes, and we are grateful to every one of them.

Sacrifice is the truth that we remember and honor on Veterans Day, especially today when sacrifice can too often seem an on-the-decline virtue in American life.

To always honor our veterans is the reason that, in 2005, the New York State Senate established a Veterans Hall of Fame. We will induct our class of 2023 later this week, on Thursday, November 9, just days before the nation's Veterans Day observance on Saturday, November 11. The Senate's virtual induction ceremony will begin at 11:00 a.m. and can be viewed on my Senate website, omara.nysenate.gov. I'm proud to be inducting Andrew Swarthout of Yates County, a highly decorated Vietnam War veteran and mainstay of local veterans' organizations, as this year's representative of the 58th Senate District.

One other way that New York government seeks to constantly honor military service has been through the development of new laws and the administration of programs and services that seek to address the many challenges facing today's veterans in areas such as health care, employment, and education. The state Division of Veterans' Affairs (www.veterans.ny.gov) was established in 1945 to assist veterans, members of the armed forces and their families. Since then, the division -- in concert with its offices in counties locally and statewide -- has strongly advocated for New York's veterans and veterans' issues at the local, state, and national levels. It is a proud history of service.

But Veterans Day, more than anything else, draws us to those monuments and memorials in our midst that still, and we hope will always, rise up to honor and remember those who have served and sacrificed.

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