

**Remarks at a Veterans Day
Ceremony in Arlington National
Cemetery, Virginia**
November 11, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much, Secretary Brown, for your introduction and for the service that you, Deputy Secretary Gober, and all of the men and women of the Department of Veterans Affairs render to our Nation every day. I thank Commander Zweiman for his remarkable address this morning, and I congratulate him on the 100th anniversary of the Jewish War Veterans of America. Thank you, sir.

To the distinguished leaders of our veterans' organizations; all the veterans who are here; the Gold Star mothers; the Gold Star wives; Major General Foley; all the members of the Cabinet who are here; the Joint Chiefs; the men and women in uniform, their families, and my fellow Americans.

Today on this hallowed hillside and all across our great land, we pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of our veterans, all those who followed our flag in war and peace, those who gave their lives, and those who came home. Each of us owes to all of them a debt we can never fully repay. The inscription on the Korean war memorial says, "Freedom is not free." For more than two centuries, our armed services have defended our freedom and made our Nation a beacon of hope for the world.

I'd like to take a moment in this special time for Americans to recognize the special contribution that one American veteran in particular has made to our Nation. Bob Dole was a 21-year-old 2d lieutenant serving in the Po Valley of Italy when a German shell struck him down in battle. He would bear the burden of his severe injury from that day forward for the rest of his life. But he refused to withdraw from the world and instead dedicated his life to serving the American people. I ask all of you here now to join me in applauding his remarkable record of achievement and patriotism to America. *[Applause]*

Today we thank God that America is at peace, but our freedom still comes at a cost. It depends upon the untiring efforts of the one and a half million men and women in our Armed Forces who defend our Nation,

protect our interests, advance our ideals: keeping the peace in Bosnia, enforcing the no-fly zone in Iraq, standing watch over the DMZ on the Korean Peninsula, promoting stability and peace in Haiti. And beyond the headlines and hot spots, our service men and women are working every day, from Diego Garcia to Guam, to keep our forces strong and our readiness razor-sharp. Standing tall with them are the Guard and the Reserves, whose citizen soldiers proudly trace their lineage all the way back to the colonial Minutemen.

All those who serve our Nation deserve our strongest support. They must have the best training, the finest equipment, access to the newest technologies. And those who do go into battle for our Nation must never be left behind. And so we continue to pursue the fullest possible accounting for those Americans who are still missing.

Those who serve in uniform deserve every chance to build good lives as private citizens. And so we must offer our veterans and their families every opportunity to live their dreams, helping them to improve their educations, find good jobs, buy homes, protect their health.

This commitment extends to pursuing answers and providing relief for Gulf war veterans with unexplained illnesses. This issue was first brought to my attention by the First Lady as she traveled across America and veterans and their family members came up and talked to her of their personal experiences. Last year, I appointed an independent Presidential advisory commission to address the health concerns of Persian Gulf veterans, their spouses and children. This commission will report its findings by year's end.

I want to assure all of you that we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to investigate these cases and to provide our Gulf war veterans with the medical care they need. Tens of thousands of examinations have been performed; 26,000 determinations of disability have been made. There are many research projects now underway. There are mysteries still unanswered, and we must do more. But the United States will not forget the people who have served us, and we will discharge our obligations to those who served in the Persian Gulf.

Today we remember and honor the past service of America's veterans. And today we renew our commitment to meet the challenges of America's future for which they gave so much. Almost two centuries ago, Daniel Webster said in his dedication of the monument at Bunker Hill, "There remains to us a great duty of defense and preservation. And there is open to us, also, a noble pursuit to which the spirit of the times strongly invites us."

My fellow Americans, on the brink of a new century, we stand before broad new vistas of hope and progress. But if we are to realize our hopes for that future, we must ensure that America remains the world's strongest force for peace and freedom, for security and prosperity. We must strengthen and expand the alliances that have brought us thus far. We must continue to reduce the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. We must confront the violent conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds that so bedevil the world today. We must stop the global scourges of organized crime, drug trafficking, and especially terrorism. We must build an open trading system for the 21st century, and we must stand with all those who stand for democracy and universal human rights.

I cannot help but note on this day that in our time, for the first time in the entire history of humanity on this planet, more than half the world's people live in democratically elected governments because of the example and the force and the power of the ideas of America and the sacrifice of America's veterans.

Let me also say that, as we meet the challenges of the next century, our unity as a people will be, as it has ever been, our greatest strength. The silent white rows of crosses that surround us mark the final resting place of men and women of all services, all ranks, all races, all religions. They stand as stunning evidence that our Founders were right: We are all equal in the eyes of God. That is something we must continue to practice until we get it right. It is something we must teach our children, and it is something we must continue to teach to those troubled areas of the rest of the world where people still insist on killing over their differences.

Our American veterans buried here came from different walks of life. They served our Nation in different places and in different ways. Yet all were united by love of country, belief in freedom and opportunity and responsibility, and their faith in America's future. As we commemorate this day of reverence and respect, let us also remember this unity of spirit that has guided our Nation forward from its beginnings. No words can repay the debt of gratitude we owe to the men and women who have stood up for our freedom, but we can honor the memory of our veterans best by remaining the best kind of Americans we can be and keeping our Nation strong and secure, one Nation under God, to fulfill the vision of a better world that so many of them, our veterans, gave so much to create.

Thank you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in Arlington, VA. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Zweiman, national commander, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, and Maj. Gen. Robert F. Foley, USA, Commanding General, U.S. Army Military District of Washington.

Proclamation 6953—National Family Caregivers Week, 1996

November 11, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

At this special time each year, we give thanks for our many blessings. Among those blessings are the quiet but heartfelt contributions made on a daily basis by our Nation's caregivers, particularly on behalf of the elderly in our society.

The true value of the role that caregivers play in the lives of America's families is immeasurable. Providing physical comfort and emotional reassurance, these strong and selfless people care for loved ones who can no longer care for themselves. The vast majority of caregivers are family members—often older relatives—and women provide most of the informal care that their families receive. Of the millions of people who provide informal care to older adults, over half are spouses