

Memorial Day Speech

May 27, 2024

Mayor Jason F. Cilento

Good morning everyone, and thank you for joining us here at Washington Memorial Park as we gather in honor of Memorial Day. It is important for us to acknowledge that today is not a day of celebration, but rather, meaningful reflection as we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. Memorial Day is a powerful reminder of the cost of freedom; a sentiment that is deeply ingrained in our community. Along with our annual parade and ceremony, the Borough of Dunellen is proud to show its dedication to honoring our veterans as North Washington Avenue and North Avenue are adorned with over 100 banners for our Hometown Heroes.

As somber an occasion as this is, Memorial Day is a beautiful display of unity and togetherness, here in our Miracle Mile. Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and walks of life come together for one purpose - to remember the countless heroes who have given their lives defending our country.

The United States of America is still the shining city upon a hill for millions around the world and we are blessed to be given the

opportunity to call this land home. This opportunity is mainly in part due to the sacrifice of the men and women in our armed forces who defend our freedoms and maintain our country's sovereignty.

It takes a special kind of person to answer the call of duty and head off into the unknown, leaving behind family and friends. Every name that is engraved on the memorials at this park and every name that appears on the banners throughout town represents a unique story of bravery and selflessness and it is a privilege that we are able to gather in their memory.

As we stand in remembrance, it is vital to understand that the reverence we feel in this moment should not be confined to a single day. We can continually honor the memory of our veterans by educating our children about the sacrifices they have made to ensure a better future for us all, supporting the families of those no longer with us, and by living our lives in a way that upholds the values they fought to protect.

I'd like to express my gratitude to the Dunellen American Legion Post 119 and Dunellen Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5479 for all that they do for the veterans in our community, across the state,

and throughout our nation. Their work each year is invaluable in planning and hosting the Borough of Dunellen's annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony to honor those who gave their lives to protect the freedoms that we as Americans hold so dearly.

Thank you to Alex Miller, Kelly Seader, and the Recreation Commission, the Dunellen Police and Fire Departments, Department of Public Works, OEM, and Rescue Squad for all of your hard work in preparing for this event, as well as making sure our participants remain safe throughout the parade and ceremony. Thank you to Mayor Jim Van Arsdale and the Green Brook Committee for joining us here each year, our parade's Grand Marshall, Mr. Bill Sutton, as well as to the Dunellen Borough Council and all of the speakers and dignitaries here with us today. And of course, thank you to everyone who walked in the parade from veterans and first responders to rec league sports teams, students, and more.

In closing, I'd like to reflect on a quote by President Ronald Reagan from his speech on Memorial Day 1981 that will forever ring true; "Today, the United States stands as a beacon of liberty and democratic strength before the community of nations. We are resolved to stand firm against those who would destroy the

freedoms we cherish. We are determined to achieve an enduring peace—a peace with liberty and with honor. This determination, this resolve, is the highest tribute we can pay to the many who have fallen in the service of our Nation."

Let us keep these words in our minds and our hearts, not just today, but every day, and may we all be inspired by the gift of freedom that these brave individuals fought so valiantly to defend.

May God bless you all, the Borough of Dunellen, and the United States of America.

Thank you.