

Veterans Day Speech
Mayor Jason F. Cilento
November 11, 2024

Good morning, everyone, and welcome. It is truly a privilege to be here with you on this Veterans Day as we gather to honor the brave men and women who have served in our nation's armed forces. Today, we reflect on the sacrifices countless individuals have made—and continue to make—to protect the freedoms that we, as Americans, hold so dear.

I'd like to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to all the veterans in attendance for your service. It is because of your bravery and selflessness that we are able to gather here today. Veterans Day serves as a solemn reminder that the freedoms we cherish are not guaranteed—they are protected by the men and women who have stepped forward, in both times of conflict and times of peace. We are forever grateful for the courage and dedication of those who have answered the call to defend the ideals that define our great nation—liberty, a strong constitutional republic, and justice for all.

A special thank you to the Dunellen American Legion Post 119 and the Dunellen Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5479. Your tireless work in serving and supporting our veterans throughout the community, the state,

and the nation is invaluable. You ensure that our service members receive the support and benefits they rightfully deserve when they return home.

I would also like to thank our friends and neighbors in Green Brook, including Mayor Jim Van Arsdale and the members of the Green Brook Township Committee, for joining us each year for this important ceremony. We are also grateful to the members of the Dunellen Borough Council, our Police, Fire, Office of Emergency Management, CERTs team, and Rescue Squad members for their continued support. Additionally, thank you to Alex Miller, Kelly Seader, the entire Recreation Department, the Department of Public Works, and our IT and Communications Team for their hard work in ensuring today's ceremony is a success.

Veterans Day traces its roots back to 1918 when it was originally recognized as Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I. In 1954, it was renamed "Veterans Day" to honor those who have served in all wars. Now, 106 years after its inception in 1918, we continue to gather on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month to recognize and thank our heroes. Words can never fully express our gratitude for all that our military has done and all they've given to defend the very ground we stand on.

Not everyone has the privilege of waking up each morning, looking up at Old Glory, and being reminded of what it truly means to be an American. Every time we see the stars and stripes waving proudly, we are reminded of what our veterans have dedicated their lives to defending—our nation's unwavering commitment to freedom. As Americans, it is our duty to honor the legacy and values our veterans have set forth and to work together to strengthen the bonds that unite us. We must never forget that our way of life, our rights, and our freedoms are made possible because of the sacrifices our service members have made. May we never take their sacrifices—and the opportunities they provide for us—for granted.

As we leave here today, let us carry these feelings of gratitude and appreciation in our hearts. I encourage you to reach out to the veterans in your lives—or even to a veteran you may pass by in a grocery store or elsewhere—and remind them that their sacrifices and efforts have not gone unnoticed. Take the time to thank them for their service and listen to the stories they have to share. Let us make every day a day of gratitude for our veterans—many of whom continue to carry the weight of their sacrifices. We can also show our appreciation for their service by volunteering, serving in our communities, and lending a helping hand to our neighbors. That, at its core, is what it truly means to be an American.

Thank you again to our veterans for your service. May God bless you,
and may God bless the United States of America.