

Memorial Day – 2009
Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder

Today marks the 141st observance of Memorial Day in these United States of America. This national day of remembrance was first held in 1868 when veterans of the Civil War designated one day in May to honor "the memory of the heroic dead."

You may remember that Memorial Day used to occur on 30th day of May. It wasn't until 1968 that the day was moved to the last Monday of the month. The significance of May 30th was an important date in the foundation of this holiday. The veterans of the Civil War, America's deadliest conflict, did not want the memory of their fallen comrades to coincide with any reminiscence of conflict. And so May 30th was chosen as an appropriate memorial as it DID NOT mark the anniversary of any battle. It was a day that embodied peace in very tumultuous times. And that day of peace was a fitting tribute, for peace is what all soldiers fight for.

Today, thousands of Americans are protecting that peace at home and abroad. They serve in times of peace, and today in times of war. Many Missourians have defended that peace, and those we honor today have died for it.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said that, "Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed..." Today, my challenge to all of us is the daily refreshing of freedom and liberty in our own hearts.

Today, our nation continues a fight for freedom's cause abroad. This is a noble cause that many have given their lives for. The nobility of patriotism is not a characteristic that is taught, but rather one that is instilled deep within the heart and soul of a patriot.

Today, we recognize the patriots of our freedom. In times of war and peace, these soldiers stood ready to serve for the cause of justice and sovereignty. This was not an easy task, nor one with great accolades or recognition. But patriots stand tall. They don't need praise or ovation. Their service often can go unseen. To a patriot, there is only one duty; the call to service.

These selfless acts of courage have solidified our nation's grasp of freedom for every man, woman and child. Regardless of race, creed, gender or class, the principles of our independence remain rooted in the lives of those who defend it.

Freedom now finds defense from a new generation of Americans. These young men and women proudly answer the call to serve their homeland in a time of uncertainty and war. They carry with them the same love of country and sense of duty of those who wore the American uniform long ago. To these young Americans we owe our deepest gratitude and thanks.

Within the foundation of patriotism I believe we see the pulse of devotion and morality. Within that devotion, we find valor.

It is our task to honor all who have served. Let us honor the defenders of America today, and for generations to come, who with the same conviction and fortitude will protect liberty's cause from those enemies, foreign and domestic. Let us also honor the families who have sent their husbands, fathers, mothers and daughters to protect the freedom and security of this great nation.

May we keep the memory of our heroes alive and well with the same devotion and patriotism to this great land that we all share. We are free by the grace of the Almighty, and the devotion of soldiers of valor.

It was President Lincoln who, while commemorating the lives of those who were lost in the battle of Gettysburg, charged our nation to never forget freedom's cost, and the sacrifices made:

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

May God continue to bless America.

Lt. Governor Peter D. Kinder serves on the Governor's Advisory Council for Veteran's Affairs.