



Ceremonies Handbook

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CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL CEREMONIES

Raising the Standard of Public Observance

In today's fast-paced culture, ceremonies—whether patriotic, commemorative, or civic—offer a rare and valuable opportunity to pause, reflect, and reconnect with shared values. Yet too often, these events fall short of their intended purpose. Poor planning, lackluster delivery, and uninspired programs can leave attendees disengaged, or worse, wishing they had not attended at all.

A well-conducted ceremony does not happen by chance. It requires intention, preparation, and deep respect for both the subject matter and the audience. When done properly, a ceremony can inspire, educate, and unify. When done poorly, it diminishes the very meaning it seeks to honor.

What Makes a Ceremony Worth Attending?

Several essential elements distinguish a meaningful ceremony from an ineffective one:

1. Clear Purpose and Theme

Every ceremony should be built around a clearly defined purpose. Whether honoring veterans, commemorating national ideals, or recognizing civic milestones, the objective must be evident and consistently reinforced throughout the program. A unifying theme helps guide both planning and presentation.

2. Thoughtful Planning and Structure

A concise, well-organized program sustains audience engagement. Events should begin on time, follow a logical progression, and avoid unnecessary delays or confusion. Each segment should serve a clear purpose and contribute meaningfully to the overall message.

3. Competent Leadership

The individual leading the program—often the master of ceremonies—sets the tone. Confidence, clarity of speech, and an understanding of the ceremony's significance are essential. A well-prepared leader maintains momentum and ensures the program flows seamlessly from one element to the next.

4. Quality Presentations

Speakers, readings, and musical selections should be carefully chosen and thoughtfully prepared. Remarks must be relevant, respectful, and appropriately timed. Overly long speeches or unprepared presenters can quickly diminish the impact of the event.

5. Respect for Tradition and Symbolism

Ceremonies often involve established protocols, particularly those involving national symbols or acts of remembrance. Observing proper etiquette demonstrates respect and reinforces the dignity of the occasion. Symbolic elements should be presented with care and, when appropriate, briefly explained so their significance is understood.

6. Meaningful Audience Engagement

While ceremonies are often formal, they should not feel distant or mechanical. Incorporating moments of reflection, participation, or meaningful storytelling can create a personal connection for attendees. Thoughtfully used symbolic gestures—such as lighting a candle in remembrance or presenting a wreath—can leave a more lasting impression than words alone.

The Cost of Poorly Conducted Ceremonies

When ceremonies are poorly executed, the consequences go beyond mere inconvenience. They risk trivializing significant observances and discouraging participation in the future.

Over time, attendance may decline, and valuable opportunities to educate younger generations about civic responsibilities and shared values may be lost.

A Better Way Forward

Improving the quality of ceremonies does not require extravagant resources—it requires a commitment to excellence. Organizers and those who have parts in the program should:

- Prepare thoroughly
- Rehearse key elements and readings in advance
- Select speakers and participants with care
- Keep programs focused and appropriately timed
- Provide clear guidance to everyone involved
- Evaluate each event and make improvements for the future

Consistency in these practices leads to measurable improvement over time.

Each example is designed to be clear in purpose, respectful in tone, and engaging for attendees. They serve as practical examples of how thoughtful planning and disciplined execution can transform a ceremony into a meaningful and memorable experience.

Ceremonies reflect who we are and what we value as a community. By approaching them with care, discipline, and respect, we ensure that each observance fulfills its purpose—honoring the past, engaging the present, and inspiring the future.

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Awards Presentation Script

Opening / Call to Order

Master of Ceremonies (MC):

“Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and honorees—please rise as we begin today’s Awards Presentation Ceremony.”

(Optional: If both an invocation and the National Anthem are included, the invocation should precede the National Anthem.)

“Thank you. Please be seated.”

Welcome Remarks

MC: “On behalf of [organization name], it is my honor to welcome you to this special occasion. Today, we gather to recognize excellence, dedication, and outstanding achievement. This ceremony is not only a celebration of accomplishments but also a reflection of the values that guide our organization—commitment, integrity, and service.”

Purpose of the Ceremony

MC: “Just as traditions remind us of our shared history and ideals we value, this ceremony gives us the opportunity to honor individuals who bring those ideals to life through their actions. Each award presented today reflects dedication perseverance, and a commitment to something greater than oneself.”

Introduction of Dignitaries / Special Guests

MC: “We are honored to be joined today by the following distinguished guests:”

(List names and titles)

“Please join me in recognizing them with a round of applause.”

Presentation of Awards

Transition to Awards

MC: “At this time, we will begin the presentation of awards. As each recipient is announced, please come forward.”

Award Category Format (repeat for each award)

MC: “Our first award is the [Award Name], presented for [brief description of criteria].”

(Pause)

“This award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated [qualities or achievements].”

- **Reading of Citation**

Presenter / MC:

“This year’s recipient has distinguished themselves through [specific accomplishments].

[Brief narrative of achievements—2–4 sentences highlighting impact and merit.]”

- **Announcement of Award**

MC: “It is my honor to present the [Award Name] to [Recipient Name].”

(Applause as recipient comes forward)

- **Award Presentation**

(Presenter hands award; optional handshake and photo)

- **Recipient Remarks (Optional)**

MC: “[Recipient Name], would you like to say a few words?”

(Repeat the above format for each award category.)

Special or Highest Honor (if applicable)

MC: “We now come to our highest honor of the day, the [Top Award Name]. This award represents the very best among us, recognizing exceptional leadership, impact, and dedication.”

(Longer, more detailed citation is read.)

“It is with great pride that we present this award to [Recipient Name].”

An Example of an Award Presentation

This award is presented on behalf of the membership of Post ____ to our Commander, [Name] in recognition of his/her exemplary leadership.

[Name], as a leader of this Post, you have:

- encouraged each member to serve in their area of strength,
- entrusted people with meaningful responsibility, and
- given them freedom to function.

Through your guidance and vision, you have shaped Post ____ into an outstanding veterans service organization.

Your excellent administrative skills, attention to detail, and dedication to the [city, town, municipality] community, have enabled this Post to meet the needs of veterans, while participating in a wide range of community service activities.

As a result, we are becoming known as a premier veterans organization.

It is truly a joy to have you as our commander. We want you to know how much we appreciate your leadership, your commitment, and all that you do for this Post.

“Please join me in congratulating [Name] on this well-deserved honor.”

Closing Remarks

MC or Senior Leader:

“Today we have celebrated individuals whose efforts inspire us all. Their achievements remind us that excellence is not accidental—it is the result of hard work, perseverance, and purpose.”

“As we leave here today, let us carry forward that same spirit in our own work and lives.”

Closing / Adjournment

MC:

“Thank you all for attending and for helping us honor these outstanding individuals. This concludes our Awards Presentation Ceremony.”

“Please join us for [reception/refreshments/networking], and congratulations once again to all of our award recipients.”

Optional Elements You Can Add

- Music between awards or during walk-ups
- Slide presentation with recipient photos
- Color guard or formal posting (if in a ceremonial/military context)
- Printed program or agenda

Flag Day Ceremony Script

For June 14, 2026 (or any Flag Day observance)

CALL TO ORDER

MC (Commander or MC):

Good [morning/afternoon/evening], ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of _____, it is my honor to welcome you to our Flag Day Ceremony.

Today, June 14, we gather as a community to honor the flag of the United States of America—a symbol of our nation, our values, and the sacrifices made to defend them.

POSTING OF COLORS

MC: Please rise if you are able for the posting of the colors.

SGT-AT-ARMS: Present, Arms.

(Color guard enters and posts flags)

SGT-AT-ARMS: Order, Arms.

MC: Please remain standing for the invocation.

Invocation

Chaplain / Local Clergy:

Almighty God,

On this Flag Day, we give You thanks for our nation and the freedoms we enjoy.

We honor the men and women who have served and sacrificed beneath this flag.

Guide us to live as worthy citizens—committed to liberty, justice, and unity.

Bless our veterans, our community, and our country. *Amen*

MC: Thank you, Chaplain / Rev. / Pastor.

Please remain standing as we continue with our Pledge and National Anthem.

Pledge of Allegiance

Sgt of Arms:

“Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.”

(Present Arms, lead the pledge, then Order Arms.)

Singing of our National Anthem

MC: “Leading us in the singing of our National Anthem will be [Name].”

(Sgt of Arms announces: Present Arms. Following the singing, Order Arms.)

MC: Thank you, [Name], for that beautiful rendition.

PURPOSE OF FLAG DAY

MC: (Audience seated)

Flag Day commemorates June 14, 1777—the day the Continental Congress adopted our first national flag.

For nearly 250 years, this banner has stood for freedom, unity, and the enduring spirit of the American people.

Through times of triumph and trial, it has remained a constant reminder of who we are... and what we stand for.

READING: “I am the Flag” by Ruth Apperson Rous

MC: At this time, we present a reading that gives voice to the symbol we honor today...

I am the flag of the United States of America.

I was born on June 14, 1777, in Philadelphia.

There the Continental Congress adopted my stars and stripes as the national flag.

My thirteen stripes alternating red and white, with a union of thirteen white stars in a field of blue, represented a new constellation, a new nation dedicated to the personal and religious liberty of mankind.

Today fifty stars signal from my union, one for each of the fifty sovereign states in the greatest constitutional republic the world has ever known.

My colors symbolize the patriotic ideals and spiritual qualities of the citizens of my country.

My red stripes proclaim the fearless courage and integrity of American men and boys and the self-sacrifice and devotion of American mothers and daughters.

My white stripes stand for liberty and equality for all.

My blue is the blue of heaven, loyalty, and faith.

I represent these eternal principles: liberty, justice, and humanity. (*brief pause*)

I embody American freedom: freedom of speech, religion, assembly, the press, and the sanctity of the home.

I typify that indomitable spirit of determination brought to my land by Christopher Columbus and by all my forefathers - the Pilgrims, Puritans, settlers at James town and Plymouth.

I am as old as my nation.

I am a living symbol of my nation’s law: the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

I voice Abraham Lincoln’s philosophy: “A government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

I stand guard over my nation’s schools, the seedbed of good citizenship and true patriotism.

I am displayed in every schoolroom throughout my nation; every schoolyard has a flag pole for my display.

Daily thousands upon thousands of boys and girls pledge their allegiance to me and my country.

I have my own law—Public Law 829, “The Flag Code” - which definitely states my correct use and display for all occasions and situations.

I have my special day, Flag Day. June 14 is set aside to honor my birth.

Americans, I am the sacred emblem of your country. I symbolize your birthright, your heritage of liberty purchased with blood and sorrow.

I am your title deed of freedom, ... (*brief pause*), which is yours to enjoy and hold in trust for posterity.

If you fail to keep this sacred trust inviolate, if I am nullified and destroyed, you and your children will

become slaves to dictators and despots.

Eternal vigilance is your price of freedom. *(brief pause)*

As you see me silhouetted against the peaceful skies of my country, remind yourself that I am the flag of your country, that I stand for what you are - no more, no less.

Guard me well, lest your freedom perish from the earth.

Dedicate your lives to those principles for which I stand: “One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

I was created in freedom. I made my first appearance in a battle for human liberty.

God grant that I may spend eternity in my “land of the free and the home of the brave” and that I shall ever be known as “Old Glory,” the flag of the United States of America.

FEATURE ELEMENT A Flag Raising Ceremony (Recommended for outdoors)

MC: As we reflect on those words, we now turn to a living symbol of their meaning.

Today, we reaffirm our respect for the flag through its raising.

(Color Guard raises flag slowly as music plays) — play instrumental music such as “America the Beautiful” or soft bugle)

OPTION B: Flag Folding Demonstration (Highly impactful indoors)

We now present a time-honored tradition—the ceremonial folding of the American flag.

This solemn duty is performed by two members.

Each fold is executed with precision and reverence—honoring the beliefs, sacrifices, and enduring values of our nation.

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

MC: The American flag represents the essence of our nation. It stands for all that we hold dear—freedom, democracy, government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent Congregationalist clergyman, social reformer, and abolitionist, who lived during the 1800’s said,

A thoughtful mind, when it sees our nation’s flag, sees not the flag only, but the nation itself, and what it stands for.

And when we look at the flag . . .

We should see the essence of America.

- We are One nation (*E. Pluribus Unum—out of many, one*)
- Under God,

- Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

We are a nation built on values—
a nation of individuals blessed with life, liberty, and freedom.

And it is those values that every service member has sworn to defend.

And, each person who died fighting one of our wars, fought to defend and preserve those values.

And especially, FREEDOM!

Where would we, who are citizens of the United States of America, be today . . . if there had not been those
who counted the cost of freedom and willingly served and sacrificed for it?

Let us now observe a moment of silence to reflect on what this flag means—

the freedoms it represents,

and the sacrifices made to defend it.

(10–20 seconds silence)

VETERAN AND YOUTH RECOGNITION

MC: At this time, we would like to recognize the veterans among us.

Would all veterans please stand or raise your hand so we may thank you for your service?

(Pause for recognition, allow audience to respond—consider applause cue)

We thank you for your service, your sacrifice, your unwavering dedication and your continued example to
our community.

MC: We would also like to recognize the youth in our community.

Would those involved in scouting or youth programs, or community service please stand?

(Pause for recognition)

Thank you. You represent the future of our nation. May you carry forward the values this flag represents.

CLOSING REMARKS

MC: The flag of the United States is a symbol of our past, present, and future.

It represents not only our nation—but the ideals we strive to uphold.

Here in Myerstown, and across this great nation, may we continue to honor it—not only in ceremony—but in
how we live each day.

May we remain worthy of the sacrifices made beneath it.

DISMISSAL

MC: This concludes our Flag Day ceremony.

Thank you for joining us on this important occasion.

May God bless our veterans, our community, and the United States of America.

We encourage you to participate in the national “Pause for the Pledge” this evening at 7:00 PM in
observance of Flag Day.

Thank you—and may you have a safe and meaningful Flag Day.

Flag Retirement Ceremony Script

Opening Formation

Participants:

- Commander (Master of Ceremonies)
- Chaplain
- Color Guard
- Detail Members (flags/fire detail)
- Oldest and Youngest Veterans present (to light the fire)
- Bugler (or recording for TAPS)

1. Call to Order

Commander:

Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise.

We are gathered here today, **[insert date]**, for the solemn purpose of honoring and retiring the United States Flag—our nation’s enduring symbol of freedom, unity, and sacrifice.

2. Lighting of the Fire

(Oldest and youngest veterans step forward and light the fire together.)

Commander (optional):

May this fire represent the spirit of our nation—passed from one generation to the next.

3. Posting / Presentation of Colors (Optional)

(Color Guard presents the flags to be retired with dignity.)

- From among all flags collected for retirement, one flag is selected to represent all others.
- The commander calls the group to attention and commands: **“Present, Arms.”**
- The selected flag is then ceremonially unfolded and held for all to see. (If a flagpole is present, it may be raised.) As this occurs, the following is read:

“This flag has served its Nation long and faithfully.

It has now reached a condition in which it should no longer be used to represent this Nation.

Today, this single flag stands as a symbol of all flags being retired from service.

The honor and respect we show here are given to all flags, including those not present.

May we never forget the ideals for which it has stood.”

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Commander:

Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

When concluded, “**Order, Arms.**”

5. Invocation (Optional)

Chaplain:

Almighty God, we thank You for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation...

Bless those who have defended the Flag, and those who continue to serve.

Guide us now as we retire these colors with dignity, reverence, and honor.

Amen.

6. Historical Reflection / Meaning of the Flag

Commander or Reader:

The Flag, known as “Old Glory,” the “Stars and Stripes,” and the “Star-Spangled Banner,” represents the land, the people, the government, and the ideals of the United States of America.

From thirteen colonies seeking liberty, our nation has grown into fifty united states. Through every trial—from Fort Sumter to Gettysburg, from Normandy to Iwo Jima, from Korea and Vietnam to today’s conflicts—our Flag has stood as a beacon of freedom.

It has flown in times of triumph and times of sorrow—in places like Pearl Harbor, the World Trade Center, and countless battlefields across the globe.

Wherever it has flown, it has represented the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering resolve of the American people.

7. Reading: “I Am Old Glory”

Reader (measured, solemn tone):

“I AM OLD GLORY” by Master Sergeant Percy Webb, United States Marine Corps

I am old glory; for more than 10 score years I have been the banner of hope and freedom for generation after generation of Americans.

Born amid the first flames of America’s fight for freedom, I am the symbol of a country that has grown from a little group of 13 colonies to a united nation of 50 sovereign states.

Planted firmly on the high pinnacle of American Faith, my gently fluttering folds have proved an inspiration to untold millions. Men have followed me into battle with unwavering courage. They have looked upon me as a symbol of national unity. They have prayed that they and their fellow citizens might continue to enjoy the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, which have been granted to every American as the heritage of free men.

So long as men love liberty more than life itself, so long as they treasure the priceless privileges bought with the blood of our forefathers; so long as the principles of truth, justice and charity for all remain deeply rooted in human hearts, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.

8. Lowering the Flag (if ceremonially raised)

The commander directs:

“Detail, prepare to lower the flag.”

As the flag is slowly lowered, the following is read:

*“With reverence and respect, we now lower this flag from its place of honor.
It has flown proudly as a symbol of our Nation’s strength, unity, and ideals.
As it is lowered, we remember the sacrifices, service, and spirit it represents.”*

The flag is lowered slowly and with dignity.

9. Folding the Flag

The commander directs:

“Detail, proceed to fold the flag.”

As the flag is carefully folded in the traditional triangular shape, the following may be read (optional but commonly included):

“The folding of the flag is a final tribute to its service.

Each fold represents the principles upon which our Nation stands—liberty, justice, and unity. Though this flag has reached the end of its service, the ideals it represents endure.”

(Folding continues until complete.)

10. Explanation of Flag Code

Commander: In 1942, Congress established the United States Flag Code.

It states that when a Flag is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified manner, preferably by burning.

What we are about to do is carried out with the utmost respect and honor for our Flag.

11. Actual Retirement

(The folded flag is carried forward and respectfully placed into the ceremonial fire. The remaining flags are then added to the fire in a reverent manner.)

– Symbolic Separation Prior to Retirement (Optional)

(The flag is respectfully separated so that the union remains intact until the final step.)

Commander: This... is your Flag.

Detail Member: The red stripes symbolize hardiness and courage—the courage of those who came before us.

(Place red stripes into the fire.)

Commander (after pause): Let us remember their sacrifice.

Detail Member: The white stripes signify purity and innocence—the ideals for which our nation strives.

(Place white stripes into the fire.)

Commander (after pause): Let us remember those who protect and care for us.

Detail Member: The blue field represents vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

The stars signify our fifty states—united as one nation.

(Place the blue field into the fire last.)

Commander (after pause): Let us reflect on the future and the responsibilities we carry as Americans.

(Optional: Threads and brass grommets may be gently placed into the fire. Additional flags may then be respectfully added.)

12. Closing Reflection

Commander or Reader:

“As these flags are respectfully consumed, we pause to reflect on the service they have rendered and the values they have embodied.

Though the fabric is consumed, the ideals it represented—freedom, courage, and unity—endure and remain ever strong.

(Optional moment of silence)

The American flag represents the very essence of our nation. It stands for all that we hold dear—freedom, democracy, and a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

13. Music / Honors

TAPS *(bugler or recording— followed by a 5-10 second moment of silence.)*

Optional: “God Bless the U.S.A.” – Lee Greenwood

14. Benediction (Optional)

Chaplain:

May God bless our nation, those who serve it, and those who remember its sacrifices.

Amen.

15. Final Dismissal

Commander: *This ceremony is complete. Thank you for joining us in honoring the flag of the United States of America. Please remain until the fire has safely consumed the colors.*

Gold Star Families Recognition Ceremony Script



Purpose

To honor and recognize Gold Star Mothers and Families for their sacrifice, courage, and enduring legacy.

Seated among the tables, VFW and Auxiliary members serve as gracious hosts—greeting families, introducing themselves, and offering a comforting presence through fellowship and conversation.

1. Opening Remarks (Commander or Presiding Officer)

“Good [morning/afternoon/evening], ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, comrades, and friends.

Today, we gather with deep respect and solemn gratitude to recognize a group whose sacrifice is beyond measure — our Gold Star Mothers and Families.

These families carry a burden that most cannot fully comprehend: the loss of a loved one who gave their life in service to our nation.

Their sacrifice is woven into the fabric of our freedom, and their courage continues to inspire us all.

Gold Star mothers, fathers, spouses, siblings, and family members — you are here today because your loved one answered the call to serve with bravery and selflessness. Their sacrifice — the ultimate sacrifice — has helped preserve the freedoms we hold dear.

We gather to remember them... and to honor you.

Thank you for being here. A deeply appreciative VFW family salutes you. We honor your strength, your courage, and the enduring legacy of your loved one.”

2. Invocation (Chaplain)

“Let us bow our heads.

Almighty God, we come before You in humble gratitude and remembrance. We ask that You bless the Gold Star Families among us — comfort them, sustain them, and remind them that their loved ones’ sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Grant us the strength to honor their legacy not only in words, but in our actions each day.

Amen.”

3. Explanation of Gold Star Tradition (Historian or Officer)

“The term ‘Gold Star’ dates back to World War I, when families would display a service banner with a blue star

representing a loved one serving in the armed forces.

If that service member was lost in the line of duty, the blue star was replaced with a gold star — a symbol of ultimate sacrifice.

Today, the Gold Star remains a solemn reminder of those who gave everything and the families who continue to carry that loss with dignity, love, and strength.”

4. Recognition of Gold Star Families

“Will all Gold Star Mothers, Fathers, spouses, and family members please rise, as you are able, so that we may recognize and honor you.”

(Pause for movement)

“To each of you: We see you. We honor you. We remember your loved one. And we thank you — not only for their service, but for your sacrifice.

On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars / American Legion Post [Number], and a grateful nation, we extend our deepest respect and enduring gratitude.”

(Optional: Present certificates, flowers, angel pins, coins, or flags)

5. Invitation to Share

“We would be honored if any of you would like to share a few words about your loved one—who they were, where they served, what they loved, and what made them special to you.”

Please feel no obligation—your presence here today already honors us.”

6. Reflection Following Family Sharing

“Thank you for sharing those memories with us. Your words remind us that these heroes were not only service members—but beloved sons, daughters, spouses, parents, siblings, and friends.

It is our responsibility—as individuals, as an organization, and as a nation—to ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten.

May God’s grace be with each of you, surrounding you with strength, comfort, and peace each day.”

7. Moment of Silence

“Let us now observe a moment of silence in honor of the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country, and in recognition of the families who carry their legacy forward.”

(Observe 10–20 seconds of silence)

8. Tribute Reading (Optional)

“They gave their tomorrow for our today.

Their courage lives on in every freedom we enjoy, and their memory lives on in the hearts of those who loved them and in a grateful nation.”

(Optional: reading of names or poem)

9. Closing Remarks (Commander)

“As we conclude, let us remember that honoring Gold Star Families is not reserved for ceremonies alone. It is a responsibility we carry forward each and every day — to remember, to support, and to never forget.

To our Gold Star Families: your loved ones’ sacrifice will always be remembered, and your strength will always be honored.

May we live our lives in a way that is worthy of their sacrifice.

Thank you, and may God bless you, our veterans, our active service members, and the United States of America.”

10. Closing Prayer (Chaplain)

O Sovereign God, may these precious moments we’ve shared remain with us.

Continue to give Your grace to each of the Gold Star Families. May they find comfort in knowing their loved rests in Your care, and that their legacy lives on—as a Hero of Freedom—in the hearts of fellow Americans and a grateful nation.

Amen

11. Closing (Optional Musical Element)

- Singing of “*God Bless America*”

Optional Enhancements

- Personalized recognition of local fallen service members (name, branch, hometown)
- Display of photos or memorial table
- Photo slideshow tribute (set to instrumental music)
- Candle or rose ceremony (one for each family or service member)
- Reading of a Presidential Proclamation for Gold Star Mothers/Families Day

Independence Day Ceremony Script

1 Opening Remarks

Master of Ceremonies (MC):

Good morning/afternoon. On behalf of VFW Post ____, American Legion Post ____, and all gathered here today, welcome.

We come together on this Fourth of July to celebrate the birth of our nation—an enduring legacy of liberty, unity, and self-determination.

On this day in 1776, our forefathers declared that freedom was not a privilege granted, but a right endowed by God to all.

Today, we honor not only the founding of this nation, but all who have defended it through generations. We celebrate the courage of those who established our independence and the dedication of those who have preserved it.

As members of this community, we gather in gratitude—for the blessings of liberty, for the strength of unity, and for the responsibility we share to uphold the ideals of our nation.

2 Posting of the Colors

MC: Please rise for the posting of the colors.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Present, Arms.

(Color guard enters and posts the flags)

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order, Arms.

3 Invocation (Prayer)

Chaplain / Clergy:

Almighty God, we give thanks on this day for the birth of our nation and the gift of freedom.

We ask Your continued blessing upon this country, upon those elected to lead us, and upon this community gathered here today.

Guide us to be worthy stewards of the liberty entrusted to us, and strengthen our resolve to live with unity, justice, and compassion.

May we honor the sacrifices of the past by the way we live today.

Amen.

4 Pledge of Allegiance

MC: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Present, Arms.

(Recite Pledge)

Sergeant-at-Arms: (After the pledge)—Order, Arms.

5 National Anthem

MC: Ladies and gentlemen, we are honored to have [Name] perform our National Anthem.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Present, Arms.

(Anthem performed)

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order, Arms.

MC: Thank you, [Name], for that inspiring performance.

6 Opening Address / Independence Reflection

Speaker: Please be seated.

The Fourth of July is a reminder. A reminder that freedom was forged through courage, vision, and sacrifice.

On July 4, 1776, there was signed in the City of Philadelphia, one of America's historic documents: the Declaration of Independence. It marked the birth of our nation which under God, was destined for leadership among the nations of the world.

We often forget that, in declaring independence from an earthly power, our forefathers made a forthright declaration of dependence upon Almighty God. The closing words of this document solemnly declare:

"With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

The *fifty-six* courageous men who signed that document understood that this was not just high-sounding rhetoric. They knew that if they succeeded, the best they could expect would be years of hardship in a struggling new nation. If they lost, they would face a hangman's noose as traitors.

Of the fifty-six, few were long to survive. *Five* were captured by the British and tortured before they died. *Twelve* had their homes, from Rhode Island to Charleston, sacked, looted, occupied by the enemy, or burned. *Two* lost their sons in the army. *One* had two sons captured. *Nine* of the fifty-six died in the war, from its hardships or from its bullets.

Whatever ideas you have of the men who met that hot summer in Philadelphia, it is important that we remember they considered liberty much more important than the security they enjoyed, and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. They fulfilled their pledge. They paid the price.

Freedom is never free. It is always purchased at great cost.

Where would we be today if there had not been those who counted that cost and willingly served and sacrificed?

This Independence Day, we celebrate not only the birth of our nation but rejoice in 250 years of freedom.

7 Declaration of Independence Reading (Optional)

Speaker: We now present a reading from the Declaration of Independence.

(Suggested excerpt: "We hold these truths to be self-evident...")

Drafted primarily by Thomas Jefferson, it outlines the foundational American principle that everyone is born equal and possesses fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

8 Reading of “*I Am the Nation*” by Otto Whittaker

Speaker: (Note: Content read or given out as a leaflet so audience can follow along)

I was born on July 4, 1776, and the Declaration of Independence is my birth certificate. The bloodlines of the world run in my veins, because I offered freedom to the oppressed. To many things, and many people, I am the nation.

I am 310 million living souls - and the ghost of millions who have lived and died for me.

I am Nathan Hale and Paul Revere. I stood at Lexington and fired the shot heard around the world. I am Washington, Jefferson and Patrick Henry. I am John Paul Jones, the Green Mountain Boys and Davy Crockett. I am Lee and Grant and Abe Lincoln.

I remember the Alamo, the Maine and Pearl Harbor. When freedom called, I answered and stayed until it was over, over there. I left my heroic dead in Flanders Fields, on the rock of Corregidor, on the bleak slopes of Korea, in the steaming jungle of Vietnam, on the sands of Iraq, and the mountainous country of Afghanistan.

I am the Brooklyn Bridge, the wheat lands of Kansas and the granite hills of Vermont. I am the coalfields of the Virginias and Pennsylvania, the fertile lands of the West, the Golden Gate and the Grand Canyon. I am Independence Hall, the Monitor and the Merrimac.

I am big. I sprawl from the Atlantic to the Pacific - my arms reach out to embrace Alaska and Hawaii - 3 million square miles throbbing with industry. I am more than 5 million farms. I am forest, field, mountain and desert. I am quiet villages - and cities that never sleep.

You can look at me and see Ben Franklin walking down the streets of Philadelphia with his bread loaf under his arm. You can see Betsy Ross with her needle. You can see the lights of Christmas and hear the strains of “*Auld Lang Syne*” as the calendar turns.

I am Babe Ruth and the World Series. I am 110,000 schools and colleges, and 330,000 churches where my people worship God as they think best. I am a ballot dropped in a box, the roar of a crowd in a stadium and the voice of a choir in a cathedral. I am an editorial in a newspaper and a letter to a congressman.

I am Eli Whitney and Stephen Foster. I am Tom Edison, Albert Einstein and Billy Graham. I am Horace Greeley, Will Rogers and the Wright brothers. I am George Washington Carver, Jonas Salk, and Martin Luther King.

I am Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman and Thomas Paine.

Yes, I am the nation, and these are the things that I am. I was conceived in freedom and, God willing, in freedom I will spend the rest of my days. May I possess always the integrity, the courage and the strength to keep myself unshackled, to remain a citadel of freedom and a beacon of hope to the world.

This is my wish, my goal, my prayer in this year of 2026 - two hundred and fifty years after I was born.

Otto Whittaker, *"I Am the Nation,"* Norfolk and Western Railway Company Magazine, January 15, 1976, front cover.

This was originally written in 1955 as a public relations advertisement for the Norfolk and Western Railway, now the Norfolk Southern Corporation, and did not contain the phrase, "the steaming jungle of Vietnam, on the sands of Iraq, and the mountainous country of Afghanistan."

It has been widely reprinted, generally without attribution, has been set to music, is reprinted by some newspapers every Independence Day, and has been read into the Congressional Record several times.

9 Patriotic Reflection

Speaker: Freedom is sustained not only by those who first claimed it, but by those who continue to protect and uphold it.

From the Revolutionary War to today, generations of Americans have stood in defense of liberty.

Today, we honor both the birth of our nation and the commitment of all who have served to ensure its survival.

Let us celebrate with pride—but also with purpose, recommitting ourselves to the ideals that define us as a people.

10 Community Recognition (Optional)

MC: At this time, we recognize members of our community who continue to serve—our veterans, active-duty personnel, first responders, and civic volunteers.

(Optional brief recognition or applause by group)

11 Signature Ceremonies (Optional)

A. 13 Colonies Candle Lighting

MC: At this time, we honor the birth of our nation with a tribute to the original thirteen colonies.

Each colony played a vital role in our nation's founding. As each name is read, a candle will be lit, symbolizing sacrifice and the enduring light of liberty that was lit and continues to burn brightly.

(Participants step forward to place lighted candle or to light candles)

Reader: New Hampshire... Massachusetts... Rhode Island... Connecticut... New York... New Jersey... Pennsylvania... Delaware... Maryland... Virginia... North Carolina... South Carolina... Georgia...

MC: From thirteen colonies, a nation was born. May their spirit, courage, and resolve continue to guide us today.

B. Recognition of Military Branches

MC: We now take a moment to honor the men and women who have served, and continue to serve, in defense of our nation.

As each branch of the United State Armed Forces is named, we ask those who have served in that branch to stand and be recognized.

United States Army... United States Marine Corps... United States Navy... United States Air Force... United States Coast Guard... United States Space Force...

Please join me in recognizing their service and sacrifice.

(Applause)

Their commitment ensures that the promise of independence lives on.

C. Bell of Freedom Ceremony

MC: Throughout our nation's history, generations of Americans have answered the call to defend freedom.

At this time, a bell will toll in honor of those who served in each era of our nation's history.

The bell will toll in honor of those who served in each era.

(Reader names wars; bell tolls after each conflict/era)

Reader: For those who served in the Revolutionary War... *(Toll)*

For those who preserved the Union in the Civil War... *(Toll)*

For those who served in World War I... *(Toll)*

For those who served in World War II... *(Toll)*

For those who served in Korea... *(Toll)*

For those who served in Vietnam... *(Toll)*

For those who served in the Persian Gulf... *(Toll)*

For those who served in the Global War on Terror... *(Toll)*

MC: May we remember their service, honor their sacrifice, and continue their legacy.

12 Patriotic Musical Tribute (Optional)

MC: We now invite [Name/Group] to present a patriotic selection.

(Examples: "God Bless America," "America the Beautiful")

13 Moment of Reflection

MC: Let us pause to reflect on the meaning of independence.

(5–10 second pause)

May we never take our freedoms for granted.

14 Closing Remarks

MC: As we conclude today’s ceremony, let us carry forward the spirit of this day.

Let us remain united as a community, committed to the ideals of liberty, justice, and equality for all.

May we honor the past, serve in the present, and inspire the future.

Thank you for joining us. May God bless you, our community, and the United States of America.

15 Benediction

Chaplain: Lord, we thank You for this day of celebration and remembrance. As we depart, may we do so with gratitude in our hearts and purpose in our actions.

Bless our nation and guide us to live in unity and peace.

Amen.

16 Retirement of the Colors

MC: Please remain standing for the retirement of the colors.

(Color guard retrieves flags and departs)

This concludes our Independence Day ceremony. Please continue the celebration safely and respectfully.

17 Post-Ceremony Music

(e.g., “Stars and Stripes Forever,” “God Bless America” instrumental)

Loyalty Day Ceremony Script



1. Call to Order

Commander:

“Comrades and honored guests, please rise as we begin our Loyalty Day observance.”

2. Presentation of Colors

Commander:

“Color Guard, present the colors.”

3. Invocation

Chaplain: “Uncover.”

“Almighty God, we gather today to reaffirm our love and loyalty to the United States of America. We thank you for our great land and the wisdom our founding fathers. We are thankful for those who, throughout history, stood against tyranny and gave their lives to preserve the freedoms we cherish.

As we reaffirm our loyalty to our nation, we ask your blessing on our ceremony and help us to be faithful stewards of the freedoms we have inherited, so that they may endure for generations to come.” Amen. Cover.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Sgt of Arms:

“Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.”

(Present Arms, lead the pledge, then Order Arms.)

5. Singing of our National Anthem

Chaplain:

“Leading us in the singing of our National Anthem will be [Name].”

(Sgt of Arms announces: Present Arms. Following the singing, Order Arms.)

6. Welcome & Purpose

Chaplain: Please be seated

“Many of our holidays celebrate the birthdays of great leaders or commemorate historical events. But the one we celebrate on May 1st is different from all the rest. It is a day set aside for the reaffirmation of loyalty to the Constitution of the United States and for the recognition of the heritage of American freedom.

Loyalty Day was established by Congress in 1958 to reaffirm our loyalty to the United States and recognize the heritage of American freedom.

As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary, we proudly uphold these values and encourage all citizens to do the same.

Recognizing and celebrating Loyalty Day has become a tradition with the Veteran of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. As we meet, we must keep in the forefront of our minds, our most patriotic of citizens and our most honorable and courageous Americans—those who have fought and gave their lives for the cause of freedom and the values we hold.

At this time, I ask that we pause for a moment of silence to honor and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation.”

7. Recognition

Chaplain:

Today, we proudly honor our veterans, community leaders, and all who embody loyalty and service.

Loyalty Day reminds us that the strength of our nation lies not only in the courage of those who served in uniform but also in the dedication of those who serve our communities every day.

We are honored to be joined today by the following distinguished guests:

(List names and titles)

Please join me in recognizing them with a round of applause.

Each of these community leaders has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those they represent. Through their leadership, they ensure that our towns remain vibrant, safe, and united.

Their efforts—whether in supporting local initiatives, fostering economic growth, or responding to the needs of their neighbors—reflect the very spirit of service that Loyalty Day celebrates.

Thank you for joining us. Your dedication strengthens our communities, fortifies our nation, and inspires future generations. We deeply appreciate your service and commitment.

8. Reading of the 1958 Joint Resolution to Designate May 1st as Loyalty Day

Chaplain:

In 1958, Congress passed a Joint Resolution proclaiming May 1st as Loyalty Day, to be observed annually. You'll find the full text of this resolution on the back of your "Loyalty Day" handout.

Let's read the Joint Resolution together:

"Resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the 1st day of May of each year is hereby designated as Loyalty Day and is to be set aside as a special day for the reaffirmation of loyalty to the United States of America and for the recognition of the heritage of American freedom; and the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon officials of the Government to display the flag

of the United States on all Government buildings on such day and inviting the people of the United States to observe such day, in schools and other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies.”

9. Reading of 1959 Presidential Loyalty Day Proclamation

Chaplain:

“President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1959 Presidential Proclamation officially designated May 1st as Loyalty Day, calling on Americans to observe the day with ceremonies that reaffirm their commitment to the United States and its democratic traditions.

This was the first official observance of Loyalty Day, a holiday established by Congress in 1958 to counter International Workers' Day and promote patriotism during the Cold War.

The proclamation encouraged patriotic, civic, and educational organizations to participate and requested that government buildings proudly display the American flag.

_____ will present President Eisenhower’s 1959 Loyalty Day Proclamation. (All attendees have received a copy of the proclamation)



April 18, 1959

By the President of the United States of America

Dwight D. Eisenhower

A Proclamation

Whereas loyalty to the United States of America, its democratic traditions and institutions, and the liberties embodied in our Constitution is essential to the preservation of our freedoms in a world threatened by totalitarianism; and

Whereas it is fitting and proper that we reaffirm by special observance our loyalty to our country and our gratitude for the precious heritage of freedom and liberty under law; and

Whereas the Congress, by a joint resolution of July 18, 1958 (72 Stat. 369), has designated May 1 of each year as Loyalty Day, and has requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies:

Now, Therefore, I, Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States of America, do hereby call upon the people of the United States, and upon all patriotic, civic, educational, and other interested organizations, to observe Friday, May 1, 1959, as Loyalty Day, in schools and other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies in which all of our people may join in the reaffirmation of their loyalty to the United States and the renewal of their dedication to the concepts of the freedom and dignity of man.

I also direct the appropriate officials of the Government to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this eighteenth day of April in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and eighty-third.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dwight D. Eisenhower".

10. Reading of 2026 Presidential Loyalty Day Proclamation

Chaplain:

“Since 1959, every U.S. President has upheld the tradition by issuing a Loyalty Day Proclamation.”

11. Patriotic Element

Chaplain: “Please stand and join in singing *“My Country, ‘tis of Thee”*”

My country, ‘tis of Thee,
Sweet Land of liberty
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrim’s pride,
From every mountain side
Let Freedom ring!

Our fathers’ God to Thee,
Author of Liberty
To thee we sing,
Long may our land be bright
With Freedom’s holy light,
Protect us by thy might
Great God, our King.

Text: Samuel F. Smith, 1832 Music: From Thesaurus Musicus, London, 1744

12. Loyalty Day Remarks

May 1 of each year is recognized as “Loyalty Day.”

This day is set aside for citizens of the United States to reaffirm their commitment and loyalty to the United States of America and its Constitution.

Our Constitution guarantees every citizen certain fundamental freedoms, including:

- **Freedom of Speech** – The right to express opinions openly.
- **Freedom of Religion** – The right to practice any faith or none at all.
- **Equal Protection Under the Law** – Everyone is treated equally under the law. If accused of a crime, you have the right to a fair and public trial.
- **Right to Vote** – Citizens choose their leaders through free and fair elections.

The Constitution establishes a system of government where:

- Leaders are chosen by the people through elections.
- A system of checks and balances prevents any branch of government from becoming too powerful.
- All leaders are bound by law and must respect and act in accordance with the Constitution.

The opposite of our form of government is one where power flows downward from the rulers—an authoritarian or autocratic system.

- Leadership may be inherited, appointed, or tightly controlled, rather than chosen by the people.
- The rulers act without checks and balances, and citizens have no guaranteed rights.
- Laws may be applied unevenly, changed arbitrarily, or ignored entirely.

In short, it is a society where freedom exists only at the whim of those in power.

Conclusion

Loyalty Day reminds us that our form of government and the freedoms we cherish are neither accidental nor guaranteed—they are secured by our Constitution and sustained by our unwavering commitment to uphold it every day.

By reaffirming our loyalty to the United States and its Constitution, we echo the timeless words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address: a “*government of the people, by the people, and for the people.*” This ideal defines our republic—a system where power comes from the citizens, is exercised through their representation, and serves their interests, ensuring that such governance never disappears from the earth.

Today we reaffirm our loyalty and commitment to the United States of America and its Constitution. Let us work together to protect, defend, and preserve our form of government for generations to come

13. Reciting of The American's Creed

Chaplain: Stand with me for the reciting of The American's Creed.

– The American's Creed serves as a statement of civic faith. It was written by William Tyler Page in 1917. The Creed was accepted by the United States House of Representatives on April 3, 1918.

The American's Creed

by William Tyler Page

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

– Written 1917, accepted by the United States House of Representatives on April 3, 1918.

The American's Creed serves as a statement of civic faith.

14. Closing

Chaplain: Bow with me for the benediction

“Lord, guide us as we live each day, renewed in our loyalty and dedication to our nation. Amen.”

- “Colors will be retired in place.”
- “This concludes our Loyalty Day ceremony. Thank you for joining us.”

Memorial Day Ceremony Script

Opening Remarks

Master of Ceremonies (MC): Good morning. On behalf of VFW Post ____ and American Legion Post ____, and all who have gathered here today, welcome.

We come together on this Memorial Day to honor and remember the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country.

Their sacrifice secured the freedoms we enjoy today, and it is our duty to remember them—not only on this day, but always.

As long as two of us survive, so long will the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars render tribute to our heroic dead.

On this day, forever consecrated to our fallen, we are assembled once again to express our sincere reverence.

This cemetery represents the resting places of many departed comrades who served in all wars. Wherever the body of a comrade lies, there the ground is hallowed.

Our presence here is in solemn commemoration of all these men and women—an expression of our tribute to their devotion to duty, their courage, and their patriotism.

By their service on the land, on the sea, in the air, and in space, they have made us their debtors.

For the flag of our nation still flies over the land of the free.

Posting of the Colors

MC: Please rise for the posting of the colors.

SGT-AT-ARMS: Present Arms.

(Color guard enters and posts flags)

SGT-AT-ARMS: Order Arms.

Invocation (Prayer)

Chaplain / Local Clergy:

Almighty God, today we gather in solemn remembrance. We give thanks for the brave men and women who served this nation and gave their lives in defense of freedom.

Grant us the wisdom to honor their sacrifice by living lives worthy of the liberty they preserved.

Comfort their families, and bless this community as we remember with gratitude and reverence.

Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

MC: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SGT-AT-ARMS: Present Arms.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America...

SGT-AT-ARMS: (After the pledge)—Order, Arms.

National Anthem

MC: Ladies and gentlemen, we are honored to have [Name] with us today to perform our National Anthem.

SGT-AT-ARMS: Present Arms.

SGT-AT-ARMS: (*After anthem concludes*)—Order, Arms.

MC: Thank you, [Name], for that beautiful performance.

Opening Address / Welcome Speech

Local Veteran or Official: Please be seated.

Memorial Day is a time of reflection.

In communities like ours, these names on the markers around us are not distant—they are family members, friends, and neighbors.

They were ordinary people who answered an extraordinary call.

Today, we pause in their presence and commit ourselves to remembering their courage, their sacrifice, and their legacy.

Reading of Names / Tribute to the Fallen

(Optional; often included in smaller ceremonies)

Speaker: We remember those from this community who gave their lives in service...

(Names of local veterans may be read, or a moment of silence observed instead.)

Memorial Reflection

Speaker: Freedom is never free.

Each headstone we see today represents a life given so that others may live in peace.

We honor not only their sacrifice, but also the families who bore that sacrifice.

Let us never take for granted what has been given to us.

Wreath Placement / Floral Tribute

MC: One of the most enduring traditions of remembrance is the laying of a wreath, symbolizing honor and eternal remembrance.

At this time, we invite representatives to place a wreath in honor of our fallen.

(Wreath is placed at a memorial or flagpole)

Rifle Salute / Volley

MC or Honor Guard Commander: Officers and members of Myerstown Memorial VFW Post 6076 and American Legion Post 880, we will now pay tribute to our departed comrades.

In doing so, we offer a solemn tribute to comrades, wherever they may rest.

Please stand for the rifle salute.

Honor Guard Detail: Attention!

(Three-volley salute) Ready! Aim! Fire! Aim! Fire! Aim! Fire!

Playing of Taps

MC or Honor Guard Commander:

Comrade Bugler, sound “TAPS.”

Present arms!

(After TAPS concludes)—Order, arms.

MC: Let us continue in silent reflection for those we have lost. Let us also remember those still unaccounted for, whose fate remains unknown.

(Moment of silence at least 10-15 seconds)

We also encourage all present to pause at 3:00 p.m. today and join with Americans across the nation for the National Moment of Remembrance.

Closing Remarks

MC: As we conclude, let us carry forward the memory of those we honor today.

May we live with gratitude, serve with purpose, and prove ourselves worthy of their sacrifice.

Thank you for being here, and may God bless our fallen heroes, their families, and the United States of America.

Benediction

Chaplain: Let us pray.

Lord, as we depart from this place of remembrance, may we do so with renewed appreciation for the sacrifices made on our behalf.

Keep alive in us the spirit of honor, courage, and service. Amen.

Retirement of the Colors

MC: Please remain standing for the retirement of the colors.

(Color guard retrieves flags and departs)

This concludes our Memorial Day Ceremony. Please feel free to greet one another quietly as we depart.

Post-Ceremony—Soft Instrumental Music

(e.g., “God Bless America” instrumental)

POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony Script

September 18, 2026

1. PRE-CEREMONY NOTES (FOR ORGANIZERS)

- Small ceremonial table (altar) centered at front, draped in black cloth; POW/MIA candle centered.
- Missing Man Table set in a place of honor (if used).
- POW/MIA flag properly displayed in accordance with U.S. Flag Code.
- Post officers seated front row, right of center aisle (in rank order or by representative).
- Auxiliary officers seated front row, left of center aisle.
- Color Guard in position and prepared.
- Bugler in place and ready for “Taps.”
- Bell (optional) positioned for remembrance tolling.
- Wreath and memorial items in place.
- All symbolic tributes prepared in advance.

2. Call to Order

Commander / Master of Ceremonies (MC):

“Good [morning/afternoon/evening], ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to this Veterans of Foreign Wars Post ceremony in observance of National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Today, we gather in solemn remembrance to honor those who endured captivity as Prisoners of War and those who remain Missing in Action. This day reminds us of our nation’s enduring and solemn promise—that they are never forgotten and never left behind.”

(Pause)

“Please rise for the Posting of the Colors.”

3. Posting of Colors

Commander: “Color Guard, post the colors.”

(Color Guard posts the colors and the bearers and guards will remain with the Colors during the ceremony.)

Commander: “Hand salute... Present Arms!”

(Hold salute, then) “Order Arms.”

4. Invocation

Commander: “Please remain standing for the invocation.”

Chaplain / Local Clergy:

“Almighty God, we gather today in gratitude and remembrance. We ask Your blessing upon those who endured captivity, and those who never returned home.

Comfort their families, strengthen our resolve, and guide this nation in keeping faith with them.

Amen.”

Commander: “Thank you, Chaplain / Rev. / Pastor.”

5. Pledge of Allegiance

Commander: “Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.”

“Hand salute... Present Arms!”

(After pledge) “Order Arms.”

6. National Anthem

Commander: “Remain standing for the National Anthem.”

(Live or recorded performance)

Hand salute... Present Arms!”

(After completion) “Order Arms.”

7. Opening Remarks

“National POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed annually on the third Friday in September. It honors all Americans who were held as prisoners of war and those who remain unaccounted for from conflicts throughout our nation’s history.”

“Their sacrifice represents the cost of freedom. Their absence reminds us of our sacred duty.

As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we reaffirm our commitment—to seek the fullest possible accounting of all missing service members and to ensure their stories are never forgotten.”

8. Symbolic Tributes (Optional)

(Note to those offering tributes: Make sure your back is not toward the audience when placing tributes.)

Commander: “In commemorating the virtues of our POW/MIA comrades who served their country in its hour of need we will offer symbolic tributes.”

(Participants step forward, place item, salute, and return)

1. **Commander:** “On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I present this **evergreen** as a symbol of our continual relationship, enduring loyalty and everlasting remembrance of our comrades.
(Step forward and lay a piece of evergreen. Salute [slowly] - - and return to your seat)
2. **Sr. Vice Commander:** I place upon our sacred altar these **red flowers**, symbolizing the blood they shed, and the courage they displayed, in defense of freedom, brotherhood, truth, and justice.”
(Step forward and lay red flowers. Salute [slowly] - - and return to your seat)
3. **Jr. Vice Commander:** In honor of their commitment and service on behalf of others, I place these **white flowers** as a symbol of pure, unselfish devotion. May each of us seek to emulate such pure unselfish devotion to God, our country, and our loved ones.
(Step forward and lay the white. Salute [slowly] - - and return to your seat)
4. **Post Member:** On top of the evergreen and beside the white flowers, I present these **yellow flowers** as a tribute to the bright, sunny, joyful times, they had with their fellow service members and families. As time went on, and as long as they had life, with the aid of their memory, they could relive and enjoy again those happy and special times they had.
(Step forward and lay the yellow flowers. Salute [slowly] - - and return to your seat)
5. **Chaplain:** On behalf of our glorious republic, for whose integrity our POW and MIA comrades willingly served, I place upon our memorial table this small **flag of the United States**. It is the symbol of our nation and the freedoms for which they served.”
(Step forward and lay the small flag. Salute [slowly] - - and return to your seat)
6. **Auxiliary President:** I place this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its unending circle reminds us that their deeds live on forever in the hearts of a grateful nation.”

9. POW/MIA (Missing Man) Table Ceremony (Optional)

Commander / MC:

“As you entered, you may have noticed a small table set in a place of honor.

This is the POW/MIA—or Missing Man—Table. It symbolizes those who are not with us today.”

(Gesture toward the table)

“This table is set for one, representing the members of our armed forces who are missing from our ranks—we call them comrades, brothers, and sisters.” [goatlocker.org]

Explanation of items (pause—speak slowly and reverently):

- “The table is small — symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his or her oppressors.” [goatlocker.org]
- “The white tablecloth — represents the purity of their intentions when answering the call to serve.” [dla.mil]
- “The single red rose — reminds us of their families and loved ones who keep the faith.” [goatlocker.org]
- “The yellow ribbon — represents our continued determination to account for the missing.” [goatlocker.org]

- “The slice of lemon — reminds us of their bitter fate.” [dla.mil]
- “The salt — symbolizes the tears of their loved ones.” [dla.mil]
- “The glass is inverted — they cannot toast with us today.” [goatlocker.org]
- “The chair is empty — they are not here.” [dla.mil]
- “The candle — reflects the light of hope that lives in our hearts.” [dla.mil]

(Pause)

“Let us never forget...

You are not forgotten.”

10. Moment of Silence

“I ask that you join me in a moment of silence to honor our POWs and MIAs.”

(15–30 seconds)

11. Playing of Taps

Commander or Honor Guard Commander:

Comrade Bugler, sound “TAPS.”

Present arms!

(After TAPS concludes)—Order, arms.

MC (softly): Let us continue in silent reflection for those we have lost—and for those still unaccounted for, whose fate remains unknown.

(Moment of silence at least 10-15 seconds)

12. Closing Remarks

“Today we have honored those who suffered and endured captivity and those whose fate remains unknown.

Their courage, sacrifice, and service are forever woven into the fabric of our nation.

As members of the VFW and citizens of the United States, we renew our solemn promise: **We will not forget. We will not rest until all are accounted for.”**

13. Benediction (Chaplain)

“May God bless our POWs and MIAs,

Bring comfort to their families and guide this nation in its unwavering commitment to them.

Amen.”

14. Retirement of Colors

- Color Guard retires colors
- *(Colors retired)*

15. Dismissal

“This concludes our POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony.

Thank you for attending, your respect, and for your continued commitment to honoring our missing.”

Optional Enhancements (VFW-style)

- POW/MIA flag raising or lowering
- Wreath-laying ceremony
- Guest speaker (former POW or family member)
- Reading of names of local MIAs
- Playing “God Bless America” or “Amazing Grace”

Veterans Day Community Ceremony Script

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Opening

Master of Ceremonies (MC):

“Good morning/afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post ___, welcome to our Veterans Day ceremony.

Today, we gather to honor the men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Veterans Day is a time for our nation to recognize all who answered the call to serve and defend our freedoms.

Please rise for the presentation of the colors.”

Presentation of the Colors

Color Guard enters and posts the colors.

MC: “Please remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Invocation

Chaplain: “Almighty God, we gather today with grateful hearts to honor those who have served our nation in times of peace and war. Bless our veterans, active-duty service members, military families, and those who have given their lives in defense of liberty. Guide us to be worthy of their sacrifice and commitment. Amen.”

Pledge of Allegiance

“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America...”

National Anthem

MC: “Please remain standing for the National Anthem.”

(Sung live, recorded, or instrumental)

Welcome Remarks

Post Commander or MC: “Thank you for joining us as we observe Veterans Day. Today is not simply a holiday; it is a time for reflection, gratitude, and remembrance.

Veterans Day, is a day set aside “to honor men and women who have served in the Armed Forces.”

- Memorial Day honors America’s war dead.
- Veterans Day honors all American veterans—living and deceased.

History of Veterans Day

Veterans Day traces its origins to November 11, 1918, when the guns of World War I fell silent. Fighting ceased at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month following an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany.

In 1954, the holiday became Veterans Day, honoring all American veterans who have served our nation.”

- In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day.
- In 1938, Congress declared it a federal holiday.
- In 1953, the citizens of Emporia, Kansas, began calling the observance Veterans Day.
- In 1954, Congress officially renamed the holiday Veterans Day to honor all American veterans.
- While briefly observed on a Monday in 1971, it was later returned to November 11 to preserve its historic significance.

Today, Veterans Day continues to be observed on November 11, honoring the patriotism, service, and sacrifice of America’s veterans.”

Veterans Day Message

MC or Guest Speaker: “America’s veterans represent generations of service and sacrifice. They came from farms and cities, small towns and large communities. They have served on land, at sea, in the air, and around the world.

Their service reflects courage, commitment, and devotion to something greater than themselves. The freedoms we enjoy every day are protected because of their willingness to serve.

Today, we thank every veteran for answering the call when their nation needed them.”

Recognition of Veterans

MC: “At this time, we ask all veterans to stand and be recognized.”

(Pause for applause)

Optional by branch:

“As I call each branch of service, please stand and remain standing.”

- United States Army
- United States Marine Corps
- United States Navy
- United States Air Force
- United States Coast Guard
- United States Space Force

“Please join me in thanking these veterans for their service.”

Guest Speaker

(10–15 minute address)

Introduction Example:

“It is my honor to introduce our guest speaker, _____.”

POW/MIA Recognition

A small table may be set with symbolic items.

MC: “The table before us is set to honor our missing comrades.

- The empty chair represents those who are not here.
- The white tablecloth symbolizes the purity of their intentions.
- The single rose reminds us of their families and loved ones.
- The candle represents hope for their return.
- The red ribbon symbolizes our continued determination to account for them.

We remember them and pledge that they will never be forgotten.”

Memorial Tribute

MC: “While Veterans Day honors all who served, we also pause to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Bell Ceremony

“Their duty is done.” (*Bell rings*)

“Their watch has ended.” (*Bell rings*)

“They are not forgotten.” (*Bell rings*)

Moment of Silence

MC: “Please join me in a moment of silence to remember all veterans, especially those who gave their lives in service to our nation.”

(20–30 seconds)

Reading: “In Flanders Fields” (Optional)

(Read by a member of the post or local student)

Wreath Placement (Optional)

MC: “We now invite representatives of our VFW Post and community organizations to place a wreath in honor of all veterans.”

(Appropriate music may be played.)

Closing Remarks

Post Commander: “Today we have honored the service of America’s veterans. As we leave this ceremony, may we remember that freedom is preserved through the dedication and sacrifice of those willing to serve.

Please take a moment—not only today—but throughout the year—to thank a veteran and support those who continue to serve.

Thank you for joining us.”

Benediction

Chaplain: “May God bless our veterans, our active military, their families, and the United States of America. Grant us peace, wisdom, and gratitude. Amen.”

Retirement of the Colors

MC: “Please rise for the retirement of the colors.”

(Color Guard retires colors.)

Closing

MC: “This concludes our Veterans Day ceremony. Thank you for attending, and may God bless our veterans and the United States of America.”

Optional Enhancements for a Community Ceremony

- Recognition of the oldest and youngest veterans present
- Patriotic musical selections by a school band or choir
- “Armed Forces Medley” with veterans standing for their branch song
- Presentation of local veteran service awards
- Post-ceremony open house with refreshments
- Post-ceremony open house with refreshments
- Display of military memorabilia and historical exhibits

VFW Patriot Day Ceremony Script

September 11, 2026

1. PRE-CEREMONY NOTES (FOR ORGANIZERS)

- U.S. Flag displayed at half-staff [halfstaff.org]
- Color Guard prepared
- Bugler ready for Taps
- Bell (optional) for remembrance tolling
- Wreath or memorial display set

2. CALL TO ORDER

Commander: "The time is now _____. Comrades and guests, please take your seats. We ask that all cell phones be silenced as we prepare to begin this solemn observance of Patriot Day."

3. PROCESSION OF COLORS

Commander: "Please rise. Color Guard, advance the colors."

(Color Guard posts the colors)

Commander: "Hand salute... Present Arms!"

(Hold salute, then)

"Order Arms."

4. INVOCATION

Commander: "Remain standing for the invocation."

Chaplain / Local Clergy: "Almighty God, on this Patriot Day, we pause to remember the lives lost, the families forever changed, and the heroes who rose in a time of great need.

We ask for Your comfort for those who still grieve, and Your strength for those who continue to serve and protect.

Help us to honor their memory not only in words, but in lives of unity, compassion, and service.

Guide us to be a light in times of darkness, and to never forget the sacrifice made for our freedom.

Amen.

Commander: "Thank you, Chaplain / Rev. / Pastor."

5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commander: "Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance."

(All recite pledge)

6. NATIONAL ANTHEM

Commander: “Remain standing for the National Anthem.”

(Live or recorded performance)

7. OPENING REMARKS

Commander or MC: “Today, we gather as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, alongside our families and community, to remember the lives lost on September 11, 2001.

Nearly 3,000 innocent Americans perished that day, and countless others have since suffered in the years that followed. [congress.gov]

We remember the courage of first responders, the sacrifice of our military, and the unity of our nation in the face of tragedy.”

8. MOMENTS OF SILENCE & BELL TOLLING

(Optional bell toll before each moment)

Reader: “On Patriot Day, our nation pauses at the times the attacks unfolded...”

- **8:46 a.m. – First plane struck the North Tower**
- **9:03 a.m. – Second plane struck the South Tower**
- **9:37 a.m. – Pentagon attacked**
- **9:59 a.m. – South Tower collapsed**
- **10:03 a.m. – Flight 93 crashed**
- **10:28 a.m. – North Tower collapsed [911memorial.org]**

(If not timed to real clock, condense into one ceremonial sequence)

Commander: “Let us observe a moment of silence.”

(Pause 30–60 seconds)

9. READING / REFLECTION

(Select one or more)

- **Names of local victims or first responders**
- **Short reading or poem**
- **Reflection on unity and service**

(Optional Speaker)

10. PATRIOT DAY ADDRESS

Guest Speaker / Commander:

Suggested themes:

- “Never Forget” commitment
- Service and sacrifice
- Role of veterans and first responders
- Patriot Day is also observed as a National Day of Service and Remembrance [congress.gov]
- Call to community service and unity with a “Community Service Pledge”

“COMMUNITY SERVICE PLEDGE”

Commander or MC:

“Patriot Day is not only a day of remembrance—but also a National Day of Service and Remembrance, calling on all Americans to honor the fallen through service to others.”

(Pause briefly)

Commander:

“I ask all who are able to please stand and join me in a Community Service Pledge.”

(All stand)

Commander leads:

**“In remembrance of those we lost on September 11, 2001,
We pledge to serve our community, our state, and our nation.**

**We will honor the sacrifices of the fallen
By acts of compassion, service, and unity.**

We will support our veterans, first responders, and their families.

**We will strive to strengthen our communities
And uphold the values of freedom and democracy.**

**With gratitude and resolve,
We pledge to never forget,
And to carry forward the spirit of service.**

So, help us God.”

(Pause)

Commander:

“Thank you. Please be seated.”

11. WREATH LAYING OR MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

Commander: “We now honor those who gave their lives.”

(Wreath placed; salute given)

12. RIFLE VOLLEY SALUTE

Commander:

“We will now render the Rifle Volley in honor of those who made the ultimate sacrifice on September 11, 2001, and in all conflicts in defense of our nation.”

Commander:

“Honor Guard, prepare to fire.”

(Honor Guard moves into position)

Commander:

“Ready... Aim... Fire!”

(First volley)

Commander:

“Aim... Fire!”

(Second volley)

Commander:

“Aim... Fire!”

(Third volley)

(Short pause)

Commander:

“Order Arms.”

Commander:

“These volleys are rendered in solemn tribute to the fallen, whose sacrifice we shall never forget.”

12. FINAL BELL CEREMONY (OPTIONAL)

Honor Guard / Firefighter Representative: “The ringing of the bell symbolizes the end of watch for our fallen heroes.”

(Ring bell 3 times)

13. TAPS

Commander:

“Honor Guard, render honors.”

(Bugler plays Taps)

14. CLOSING PRAYER

Chaplain: “Almighty God, as we depart from this time of remembrance,

we carry with us the memory of those we have honored today.

Grant us peace in our hearts, courage in our duties, and compassion in our daily lives.

Help us to walk forward united building a more just and peaceful nation.

May Your blessing go with us.

Amen.

15. CLOSING REMARKS

Commander: “Let us leave here today with a renewed commitment to our country and to one another.

May we always remember—and may we always honor—the sacrifices made on September 11, 2001.

This ceremony is now concluded.”

16. RETIRING THE COLORS

Commander:

“Please rise. Color Guard, retire the colors.”

(Colors retire)