

## Memorial Day

It wasn't until 1971 that the last Monday in May became the official national holiday we know today as Memorial Day. The day itself was born from the enormous tragedy of the Civil War, when fellow soldiers and family members in both the North and South decorated the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers. In 1868, seeking to formalize this touching tribute, General John Logan, Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, issued General Order No. 11 designating May 30, 1868, Decoration Day "for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion." Preferring to use the dates already established in their states and communities, the southern states largely ignored the designated date of May 30 until after World War I when the name was officially changed to Memorial Day and was expanded in scope to include honoring those who had died in all wars.

How fitting that we have this ceremony here today. The original facade of this great Memorial, as well as Memorial Drive and Memorial Bridge, were originally built and dedicated in public recognition of the Civil War dead and to pay tribute to a nation reunited. The cobblestones, prominently joining the center of the bridge and drive and extending through the plaza and the interior of the Memorial, symbolize the reunification of our nation. We are proud that the Women's Memorial sits atop and is part of this historic and powerful symbol of our nation's past.

While today is a day to honor our war dead, it is also a day of remembrance of our fellow Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen who fought the good fight and made our military and the nation a better place because they served. Though many live on in our hearts, sadly, many more have left our side and gone on before us. Here at the Women's Memorial, at the gateway to Arlington National Cemetery, our nation's most hallowed place, their memories are all around us and we are reminded daily of how high the price of freedom, how fragile and precious the gift of life, and how plentiful are America's true heroes.



*The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America annually provides the wreath for this ceremony. This year, we are also pleased to have the WAC Veterans Association; Gold Star Wives; Alexandria American Legion Auxiliary Unit 24; Twenty and Four, The Honor Society of Women Legionnaires and Blue Star Mothers of America join us in placing wreaths.*

*The rose petals in today's ceremony are from the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues wreath-laying ceremony and the generous gift of Conklyn's Florist.*

*Many thanks to the women and men of the Military District of Washington and to our faithful volunteers for their support of this Memorial Day Ceremony.*

### Welcome

*Major General Dee Ann McWilliams, USA (Ret.)  
Foundation Board of Directors*

### Presentation of the Colors *Joint Service Color Guard*

**National Anthem**  
*Ms. Michelle Terry*  
VA Center for Women Veterans

**Invocation**  
*Chaplain (Colonel) Geraldine D. Manning, USA (Ret.)*

**Service Tributes**  
*Lieutenant Colonel Yolonda R. Summons, USA  
Major Lina M. Downing, USMC  
Master Chief Petty Officer Deanna L. Foust, USN  
Technical Sergeant Carrie L. Pierce, USAF  
Lieutenant (JG) Virginia Hudgins, USCG*

**Keynote Address**  
*Ms. Betty Moseley Brown, Ed.D.*  
Associate Director, VA Center for Women Veterans

**Wreath Laying**  
*The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, DC  
Twenty and Four, The Honor Society of Women Legionnaires  
Alexandria American Legion Auxiliary Unit 24  
WAC Veterans Association  
Blue Star Mothers  
Gold Star Wives*

### Personal Tributes

**Benediction**  
*Chaplain (Colonel) Geraldine D. Manning, USA (Ret.)*

**Taps**  
*Staff Sergeant Mark Metrinko, USA  
Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps*

**Exhibition Unveiling**  
*"A New Generation of Warriors"*