

What veterans mean to N.M.

Written by By Tom Udall Senator, D-N.M.
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Veterans Day represents the opportunity to reflect, acknowledge and honor the brave women and men who have served and sacrificed to protect our families, our freedoms, our democracy, and our way of life. Our veterans have protected our nation's bedrock constitutional principles, rule of law, and the values that define our nation our very democracy. These are principles that are not freely given to us. Instead, each generation is called on to protect and renew our commitment to democracy and freedom— and veterans have selflessly answered this call with unmatched courage.

New Mexico families have a proud tradition of service, from the Navajo Code Talkers, to the veterans of Bataan, to the service members in uniform today. Last year, my staff and I had the privilege of collecting the stories of New Mexico veterans across the state as part of the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. It was a profound honor to listen to the stories veterans have to share, and to work to ensure that the experiences of Native and Hispanic veterans are well-documented in the Veterans History Project. I hope that families and communities across New Mexico will take on this project to hear and record veterans' stories for the Library of Congress as their own.

We must ensure that the men and women who have sacrificed to defend our nation are remembered and uplifted for generations to come. And that we vigorously defend the Constitution in peace as they did during war.

Today also marks the completion of the Native American Veterans Memorial. It is only right that the Native veterans who were prepared to sacrifice everything to defend their land and their

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country are given a place of honor on the National Mall. But in addition to these fitting tributes, we must ensure that we fulfill our commitments to veterans with concrete support and action for Native veterans and all veterans. We can never fully repay what we owe to those who have put their lives on the line for us all, but today we must recommit to serving them as well as they have served us, and ensuring they receive the support and services they have earned.

I will continue to work to make sure that veterans across New Mexico have access to quality medical care for visible and invisible wounds, have the resources they need to continue contributing to our communities with meaningful work or renewed service, and that they and their families, feel the appreciation of a grateful state and nation.

By Tom Udall
Senator, D-N.M.