‘

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

(Acknowledge any VIPs/special guests)

First and foremost, I want to begin today by recognizing all those among us who have been a part of the great brotherhood and sisterhood we call the U.S. military—our veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen and reservists. Your service and sacrifice have kept our country safe and free. If you’re able, please stand to be recognized.

**<APPLAUSE>**

Veterans Day looks a lot different this year than it has in the past. Our current state of affairs and the protective measures implemented across the country to stop the spread of COVID-19 have forced us to think creatively to ensure we stay safe while honoring our nation’s heroes.

The same was true a century ago as the world’s population was finally beginning to recover from another pandemic—the Spanish flu. For disabled World War I Army veteran Judge Robert Marx, an idea was beginning to take shape during those tumultuous times that would impact the lives of countless veterans and their families for generations to come.

He had witnessed how his fellow veterans fared after returning home from the war, many seriously disabled and unable to find work or access proper medical care. He saw how few resources existed to aid those who served so honorably in the nation’s defense, and he vowed to bring about change.

And, indeed, he did. Judge Marx founded the Disabled Veterans of the World War—now known as DAV—to advocate for the men and women who risked all for the sake of this country, particularly those who were injured or became ill in the course of doing so.

This year, as we mark Veterans Day and honor our nation’s veterans and their selfless courage, we would be remiss if we did not also take the time to celebrate Judge Marx and the legacy he left behind, which enables us to do the work we do for veterans still today.

Veterans like Adam Greathouse.

**<PAUSE>**

Adam enlisted in the Army in 1999 and quickly discovered it was what he was meant to do. Being part of a team, working to accomplish a mission and excelling at physical fitness contributed to a fulfillment he had never known before.

But fate had other plans. When he deployed to Kosovo in 2001, he became a casualty of chemical weaponry left from the conflicts in the former [Yoo-goh-slah-vee-uh]. The toxins mixed with the sand and dust, forming billowing clouds that engulfed the tank Adam was riding in, filling the air—and his lungs—with a deadly substance.

Adam began to experience tightness in his chest, hallucinations and labored breathing. Within hours of his exposure, he found himself unable to stand.

Adam was rushed to medical, where his breathing stopped entirely.

He woke up *two months* later, attached to a ventilator with staples stretching from the left side of his chest around to his back. A mighty soldier once weighing a solid 215 pounds, Adam woke up 100 pounds lighter and unable to move his arms or feel anything below his hips. He had suffered a brain injury due to the lack of oxygen, and the chemical he’d been exposed to had caused organ failure and extensive damage to his lungs.

Doctors estimated he had only a 2 percent chance of survival, and the Army sent a flag home to his family to drape over his coffin.

 **<PAUSE>**

By a miracle, he survived, but it quickly became clear he could no longer be an active-duty soldier.

The decade that followed included struggles with alcohol abuse, thoughts of suicide and unbearable guilt that he had somehow let his country, his unit and himself down.

In 2011, Adam was introduced to recreational therapy at his local VA medical center and started to feel again the fulfillment he had during his time in the Army. He caught a glimpse of what he’d found in the Army that he thought he’d lost as a disabled veteran—comradery.

Today, Adam remains an inspiration and something of a local celebrity to the patients and staff at the Williams VA Medical Center where, as a DAV volunteer, he’s given more than *5,000* hours since 2015.

In addition to the thousands of volunteer hours he has under his belt as a peer mentor, he’s also spoken to nearly *2,000* veterans and VA employees, providing valuable insight into what disabled veterans experience in their recovery.

This past summer, he received DAV’s top annual honor when he was named its Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for overcoming tremendous challenges and for serving as an inspiration for others.

**<PAUSE>**

Adam is an inspiration to disabled veterans everywhere—myself included. He embodies never giving up in the face of adversity, instead overcoming obstacles, embracing a new normal and inspiring those around him.

I have to think that, if Judge Marx could see Adam, his fellow soldier today, he would be overwhelmingly proud of the victories he has achieved and his commitment to paying them forward to the next generation of veterans.

[Another example of an inspiring veteran can be found here locally. <Insert brief description/introduction of local veteran/DAV member to honor>]

We are in the business of not giving up the fight for veterans. We want everyone who served to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. That is a mission we live day in and day out as part of the veteran community.

We will not leave a brother or sister behind.

By joining organizations like DAV and getting involved, we can connect with fellow veterans in a unique way to those of us who wore the uniform. I encourage all of you to find ways to involve yourself in caring for those who bear the physical, emotional and psychological scars of war, get to know them and ensure they know you’ve got their six—especially during this time of social distancing and isolation.

Sometimes just sitting down to engage with a veteran or their family member to talk can go a long way. Call. Email. Reach out online. No matter how, keep connecting.

Thank you for taking the time to remember our heroes. They never gave up on us, and we can’t give up on them.

God bless you all, bless our veterans and bless the United States of America.

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