

## Ode to Volunteers and Veterans

By Steven Blumrosen at the eleventh Hour, of Eleventh Day, of the Eleventh Month of 2019

USA Federal Holidays (bold) and days recognized by Presidential Proclamation:

1. January 16: [Religious Freedom Day](#)
2. 3rd Monday in January: **[Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday](#)**
3. 3rd Sunday in January: [National Sanctity of Human Life Day](#)
4. various March/April: [Education and Sharing Day](#) (based on [Hebrew Calendar](#))
5. February 15: [Susan B. Anthony Day](#)
6. March 10: [Harriet Tubman Day](#)
7. March 19: [National Day of Honor](#). On December 18, 2011, President Barack Obama honored Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn veterans
8. March 25: [Greek Independence Day](#)<sup>[6]</sup>
9. March 29: [National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#)<sup>[7][8]</sup>
10. March 31: [Cesar Chavez Day](#)<sup>[9]</sup>
11. April 6: [National Tartan Day](#)
12. 2nd Thursday in April: [National D.A.R.E. Day](#)
13. April 9: [National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day](#)
14. April 14: [Pan American Day](#) and [Pan American Week](#)
15. May 1: [Loyalty Day](#)
16. May 1: [Law Day, U.S.A.](#)
17. May 15: [Peace Officers Memorial Day](#)
18. 1st Thursday in May: [National Day of Prayer](#)
19. 2nd Friday in May: [Military Spouse Day](#)
20. 2nd Sunday in May: [Mother's Day](#)
21. 3rd Friday in May: [National Defense Transportation Day](#) and [National Transportation Week](#)
22. 3rd Saturday in May: [Armed Forces Day](#)
23. May 19: [Malcolm X Day](#)
24. May 22: [National Maritime Day](#)
25. May 25: [National Missing Children's Day](#)<sup>[10]</sup>
26. last Monday in May: **[Memorial Day](#)**<sup>[11]</sup>
27. 1st Monday in June: [National Child's Day](#)
28. June 14: [Flag Day](#) and [National Flag Week](#)
29. 3rd Sunday in June: [Father's Day](#)
30. July 27: [National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day](#)<sup>[12]</sup>
31. last Sunday in July: [Parent's Day](#)
32. August 16: [National Airborne Day](#)
33. August 26: [Women's Equality Day](#)
34. weekend before September 11: [National Days of Prayer and Remembrance](#)
35. September 11: [Patriot Day](#)
36. September 11: Emergency Number Day<sup>[13]</sup>
37. 3rd Friday in September [National POW/MIA Recognition Day](#)
38. September 17: [Citizenship Day](#) and [Constitution Week](#)

39. September 22: American Business Women's Day
40. September 28: [National Good Neighbor Day](#)
41. 4th Monday in September: [Family Day](#)
42. last Sunday in September: [Gold Star Mother's Day](#)
43. 1st Monday in October: [Child Health Day](#)
44. October 6: [German-American Day](#)
45. 2nd Monday in October: [Columbus Day](#)<sup>[14]</sup>
46. October 9: [Leif Erikson Day](#)
47. October 11: [General Pulaski Memorial Day](#)
48. October 15: [White Cane Safety Day](#)
49. October 24: [United Nations Day](#)
50. November 9: [World Freedom Day](#)
51. November 11: [Veterans Day](#)<sup>[15]</sup>
52. November 15: [National Philanthropy Day](#)<sup>[16][17]</sup>
53. November 15: [America Recycles Day](#)
54. 4th Thursday in November: [Thanksgiving Day](#)<sup>[18]</sup>
55. Friday after Thanksgiving: [Native American Heritage Day](#)<sup>[19]</sup>
56. December 1: [World AIDS Day](#)
57. December 3: [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)<sup>[20]</sup>
58. December 7: [National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day](#)
59. December 10: [Human Rights Day](#) and [Human Rights Week](#)
60. December 15: Bill of Rights Day
61. December 17: Wright Brothers Day

Of these 61 days, 10 are national holidays for which Federal employees are paid, about 11 have to do with youth, 13 have to do with civil rights, and 17 have to do with war.

On March 19, 2012, President Obama proclaimed March 19, 2012 to be a National Day of Honor for our veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn who:

“left the comforts of home and family, volunteering in service to a cause greater than themselves. They braved insurgency and sectarian strife, knowing too well the danger of combat and the cost of conflict. Yet, through the dust and din and the fog of war, they never lost their resolve. Demonstrating unshakable fortitude and unwavering commitment to duty, our men and women in uniform served tour after tour, fighting block by block to help the Iraqi people seize the chance for a better future. And on December 18, 2011, their mission came to an end.

Today, we honor their success, their service, and their sacrifice....”

What command of the English language! A lawyer by training. A community organizer by talent. A president who broke the mold. Barack Obama was our last president, so far, who routinely thought about what he wrote before publishing, and let the Secret Service control how he connected with the world via smartphone.

Even so, he chose an odd (though common) way to use the word “volunteer.” He used it in the sense of Voluntary Servitude v. Involuntary Servitude (aka: “slavery” of the draft).

Since we ended our involvement in the Vietnam War, we don't draft military employees. We let them choose for themselves to join the military part of the executive branch of our Federal or State governments.

Veterans were employees.

They were not volunteering in the sense that parents volunteer to support their children's extra-curricular activities, congregants volunteer to support their faith-based organizations, or Democrats volunteer to support their county parties. Such volunteers are not paid.

Other people volunteer out of passion or a sense of duty for family. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance: National Center on Caregiving on CareGiver.org:

- Approximately 43.5 million caregivers have provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last 12 months. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]
- About 34.2 million Americans have provided unpaid care to an adult age 50 or older in the last 12 months. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]
- The majority of caregivers (82%) care for one other adult, while 15% care for 2 adults, and 3% for 3 or more adults. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]
- Approximately 39.8 million caregivers provide care to adults (aged 18+) with a disability or illness or 16.6% of Americans. [Coughlin, J. (2010). Estimating the Impact of Caregiving and Employment on Well-Being: Outcomes & Insights in Health Management.]
- About 15.7 million adult family caregivers care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. [Alzheimer's Association. (2015). 2015 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.]
- The value of services provided by informal caregivers has steadily increased over the last decade, with an estimated economic value of \$470 billion in 2013, up from \$450 billion in 2009 and \$375 billion in 2007. [AARP Public Policy Institute. (2015). Valuing the Invaluable: 2015 Update.]
- At \$470 billion in 2013, the value of unpaid caregiving exceeded the value of paid home care and total Medicaid spending in the same year, and nearly matched the value of the sales of the world's largest company, Wal-Mart (\$477 billion). [AARP Public Policy Institute. (2015). Valuing the Invaluable: 2015 Update.]
- The economic value of the care provided by unpaid caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias was \$217.7 billion in 2014. [Alzheimer's Association. (2015). 2015 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.]
- There are a total of 5.5 million caregivers caring for former or current military personnel in the U.S. (1.1 million post 9/11). [Ramchand, R., Tanielian, T., Fisher, M., Vaughan, C., Trail, T., Batka, C., Voorhies, P., Robbins, M., Robinson, E., & Ghosh-Dastidar, B. (2014). Key Facts and Statistics from the RAND Military Caregivers Study.]
- 9 in 10 (96%) caregivers of veterans are female and 70% provide care to their spouse or partner. 30% of veterans' caregivers care for a duration of 10 years or more as compared to 15% of caregivers nationally. 88% report increased stress or anxiety as a

result of caregiving, and 77% state sleep deprivation as an issue. [National Alliance for Caregiving and United Health Foundation. (2010). Caregivers of Veterans: Serving on the Home Front.]

- Military caregivers after 9/11 are more likely to be employed (63% vs. 47%), less likely to have a support network (47% vs. 71%), younger (37% under 30 years old vs. 11%), more likely to be caring for a recipient with a behavioral health condition (64% vs. 36%) or a VA disability rating (58% vs. 30%). [Ramchand, R., Tanielian, T., Fisher, M., Vaughan, C., Trail, T., Batka, C., Voorhies, P., Robbins, M., Robinson, E., & Ghosh-Dastidar, B. (2014). Key Facts and Statistics from the RAND Military Caregivers Study.]
- Veteran care recipients (post 9/11) are more likely to have no health insurance (32% vs. 23%) or regular source of health care (28% vs. 14%), have a mobility limiting disability (80% vs. 66%) or mental health/substance abuse condition (64% vs. 33%), and meet criteria for probable depression (38% vs. 20%) compared to civilians. [Ramchand, R., Tanielian, T., Fisher, M., Vaughan, C., Trail, T., Batka, C., Voorhies, P., Robbins, M., Robinson, E., & Ghosh-Dastidar, B. (2014). Key Facts and Statistics from the RAND Military Caregivers Study.]
- Veterans suffer more frequently from Traumatic Brain Injury (29%), Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Diabetes (28%), and paralysis or Spinal Cord Injury (20%). [National Alliance for Caregiving and United Health Foundation. (2010). Caregivers of Veterans: Serving on the Home Front.]

In other words, after most military personnel came back from the Korean War, there may not have been parades. There were economic benefits, including the GI Bill that provided free or lower-cost education, housing, and business start-ups. And, many could return to their old jobs, bumping those who had done their jobs while they were away. Today, veterans may get parades, standing ovations, and presidential honors. Often, they do not get sufficient economic or health benefits.

Their caregivers are often unpaid volunteers.

The military knows about unpaid volunteers.

Early on, during the Revolution, members of the military brought their muskets and bedrolls. They were fighting for Freedom from England and they were fighting for their new country founded on Jefferson's vision of equality.

230,000 soldiers worked in shifts of no more than 48,000. It was dangerous. 8,000 Continental soldiers were killed in battle, 16,000 died from starvation or illness, and 25,000 were wounded. (<https://historyofmassachusetts.org/continental-soldiers-revolutionary-war/>)

They endured winter at Valley Forge. They were molded into soldiers. They trod the battle fields and many stayed alive.

They were supposed to receive about \$6/month. Their service turned into sweat equity as they received script rather than pay. They did not have income, did not pay income taxes, did not improve their credit rating, and did not get tax deductions for their "in kind" contributions. Following Daniel Shays in 1786-87, they rebelled.

Brilliant men sat together in Philadelphia to make the Federal government more perfect in 1787. They understood human dynamics. They harnessed human drive, ambition, and competition.

They almost chose not to have a president, fearing too much power in one person. They knew of George Washington's concern that the military mindset would tend toward a military aristocracy. They limited the power of the president and of the military.

For example, instead of a standing army, they established a plug-and-play expandable army that could use the resources of each state's militia as part of the National Guard; and, they refused to budget the military more than two years at a time.

They knew they were there to change the government. They knew they would not be the last ones to try to make it more perfect. They provided procedures for amendments, supplementation by statute, and case-by-case implementation by an independent judiciary with life-time tenure so judges would not feather-their-own-nests (too much).

Now, of course, we have – in effect – a standing military. Members of the military do not show up in an RV with an F-16 or AK-47. They get paid and are issued supplies from the Arsenal of Democracy. Though, oddly, when George W. Bush ordered the military to invade Iraq, without first asking Congress for a Declaration of War, he let them die. He did not supply the troops with much Kevlar. Moms and dads had to send their sons and daughters basic gear to survive.

Even so, they were employees of the Department of Defense carrying on an offensive war.

My grandfather was in the US Cavalry in the Great War to end all wars. Then, he became an electrical engineer. In WWII, he went to the people in the military who still knew him and asked what he could do to help. Fortunately, he consulted his wife before accepting a cushy job in Pearl Harbor and, instead, chose to run a research lab in the Detroit area. They contributed to society by discovering Silly Putty while looking for alternatives to rubber. And, helped standardize vehicles on the 12-volt battery.

Every year, on this day, with his buddies, he would don his uniform, go out on the streets, share their pride in the teamwork that brought success in their war against tyrants and dictators. As veterans, they received quarters in exchange for cloth poppies their donors could wear on a lapel or blouse. We should honor our veterans, thank them for their service, ask them what they did in the war, and what their life is like now.

We could, and probably should, do that with anyone we meet, not particularly because they are veterans; rather, because they are part of our community.

My grandfather spent considerable time concerned about fire and safety in his town and the excessive judgments of extreme members of his faith. He knew what it was like to give to the village without expecting anything, directly, in return. He helped build goodwill among his neighbors and they looked fondly on the opportunity to work with him.

They were "volunteers" in the sense of approximately 43.5 million caregivers who provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last 12 months. Out of a sense of duty or passion they contributed their sweat equity with no expectation of being paid. They received no income. They did not improve their credit rating. And, did not get tax deductions for their "in kind" contributions.

What they received as volunteers was more inspirational – a stronger bond with those around them.