

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL

1:45 P.M. PDT

Governor Dan Evans, Congressman Joel Pritchard,
Mr. Dolezal, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

There is no greater privilege than to honor America's Medal of Honor recipient on Veterans Day by the planting of this symbolic tree planted here in the Pacific Northwest, where your forests are our national pride. This tree is symbolic of an America that stands tall for freedom. I am determined to keep faith with our veterans. The planting of trees will mean little if we do not preserve the values that our heroes have saved.

One of my last official duties as Vice President, perhaps the hardest of all, was to present posthumously 14 Congressional Medals of Honor to the parents, the widows and the children of America's fighting men who gave their lives in Southeast Asia. It made me even more determined when I became President to build the kind of an America that they would have wanted for their families.

With their valor, they paid the highest price for the Nation's freedom. We pledge to them, each in our own way, our resolve to preserve the freedom they made secure.

I intend to preserve peace through military strength and effective negotiation. America's goodwill must never be misconstrued as a lack of will. Peace and security require preparedness as well as dedication.

As President and as a veteran of wartime service, I am determined that America recognize the veteran as a human being and not just as a C number to be processed by computers.

Our great veterans hospitals must be the finest that medical skill, compassion and dedication can create. The VA medical and nursing care system for the older veteran must become a showcase for the entire Nation. We must render the best possible service to all vets regardless of age or the wars in which they served.

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To meaningfully commemorate Veterans Day and to pay tribute to our Medal of Honor winners, those heroes, we must keep America strong in willpower, strong in character, strong in spiritual values as well as strong in national defense.

The trees we plant here and all across America today show our dedication to the values personified by the American veteran. I salute all those who we honor here today and ask God's blessing for them, those who gave so much.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 1:49 P.M. PDT)