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***Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2014***

Good Morning everyone,

I am humbled and truly grateful for the opportunity to honor the service of women who paved the road for mothers, daughters, and sisters like myself to serve our country.

A special Thank you to Mayor Robert Dolan, Veteran Services Director Ryan McLane, and to all of you who worked countless hours on this memorial site.

There are some who would simply see a tree here on the lawn - a Magnolia Virginia (also known as the Sweet Bay Magnolia), but I see so much more here. A tree consists of three fundamental parts; roots that reach deep into the ground providing a solid base, a trunk providing material strength for the whole, and branches filled with leaves that represent vitality.

The tree is a symbol of immense and enduring strength; embodying protection, stability, and security. All of which can be said of the American Veteran, with uncompromising toughness and endurance pushing through until the mission is complete regardless of circumstance.

But along with that strength comes softness, the grass that she is planted in. Realizing that there are moments that command a warmth and subtlety toward each other when the fight feels overwhelming and the tasks daunting.

Our American flag flies here at City Hall representing the freedoms that have been paid for with the blood, sweat, and tears of those who served before us. Our liberties and values stand safe today because of the unsung heroes; America's female patriots who stood up and honorably faced the fire.

There is a special closeness we can all feel here at this place. Whether you served in the Armed Forces or not; you can share in the kinship of being a Patriot and honoring sacrifices made.

We are surrounded by the spirit of those who have served our country, heroes who have sacrificed so much for the privileges we enjoy each day.

I encourage everyone to come and sit under this memorial tree, spend some time reflecting and allow yourself to be consumed by the gravity of what this represents. Immerse yourself in the sacredness until you are overwhelmed with its importance and greatness.

Veterans come from all walks of life, but all share pride, valor, integrity, and devotion to duty. During the civil war there were over 400 documented cases of women who fought as soldiers next to their husbands and sons while disguised as men, fast forward to July 1, 2014 when Michelle Janine Howard became the first woman to attain the rank of four-star admiral in the Navy's 238-year history.

We have come a long way, though we still have some work to do.

Your presence here today and that of the people gathering all across America is a tribute to those service members and to their Families who sacrificed right along with them. It is a way to say we remember who they are and what they did for us. It is the duty of each and every one of us to ensure that younger generations understand the true meaning of Veterans Day, and the sacrifices veterans have made to secure and defend these United States of America.

So tonight when you lay your head down on your pillow, be thankful for the freedoms you enjoy and remember that there are still men and women fighting for them at this very moment.

I would like to leave you with a quote by Anne Brehm, a LT during WWII in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps.

“Let the generations know that the women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom. That our resolve was as great as the brave men who stood among us, and with victory our hearts were just as full and beat just as fast. That the tears fell just as hard for those we left behind us.”

May God bless you and may God bless these United States of America.

Thank you all so much.