

## **How a Veteran's Courage Contributes to My Freedom**

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Courage can be defined as, "strength in the face of pain or grief," meaning facing your fears or fighting through discomfort. Our veterans have displayed this courage as they put their lives on the line for our freedom. Our freedom is paid for by their service and sacrifice. Though I am young, I am not too young to recognize and appreciate the value of my liberties. I can never repay this cost, but I can show my respect, appreciation and gratitude. Every day, I have the privilege to attend school, the privilege to vote for my rights, the privilege to choose my own beliefs and the privilege to create a better life for myself and others.

I respect those who have fought to keep our country safe. Some have returned to their family and friends to enjoy the liberties that they fought for; while others paid the ultimate sacrifice. I didn't know them, and they didn't know me, yet they were willing to fight on my behalf. I am forever indebted to their service. It has been said, "It is easy to take liberty for granted, when you have never had it taken from you." These words ring true for my generation. They serve as a reminder that I am blessed to be born and raised in a country that allows me the freedom to live the life I choose and to have the privilege to stand up for what I believe in.

Our freedom in this country must continually be guarded. It is not a guarantee. It is a right that has been earned by the many who have served our country. I am proud of my family members who have helped to maintain our country of democracy through their service. They proudly served in the Army and Air Force. Their stories of bravery are inspiring and just a small example, representing the numerous acts of bravery too great to be counted. Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

We live in a time of divisiveness. Many are struggling to come to agreement on the "right to bear arms" and how that should be applied in our country. This struggle brings to light just what liberty means. We are allowed in our country to disagree, to discuss, to protest, to speak in support and to speak against. We are free to express our views and be heard. No matter our political stance, we as a country must treasure this very freedom and the rights that it allows us. I can express my beliefs, listen to the opinions of others, and support causes of my choice. That is the essence of freedom. To our country's veterans I will be forever grateful.