

Veterans Day 2011
William H. Burkhart Hall of Fame Induction Remarks
Friday, November 11, 2011 ♦ Memorial Auditorium ♦ 2:15 p.m.

Thank you very much. I stand before you today deeply humbled by an honor you have graciously just given to me. It is one I never expected, but one in which I will take great pride throughout my life ... to be included in the William H. Burkhart Hall of Fame with an amazing array of individuals for whom service to our nation was and is a calling, indeed gives me pause.

Since I learned about my induction I have thought about what I would say today. I thought, first of course, about the meaning of this day in our nation's history. You all know that November 11 was declared Armistice Day one year after fighting in World War I ceased at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Today we mark this event on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the eleventh year.

I also thought about what I learned from my own military service. While I learned many outstanding qualities from my family that have served me well, I also learned much while serving. I learned about honor. I learned about duty. I learned about serving my country and others. And I learned about myself. What I learned while on duty has helped me immeasurably in both my career and my life. Those days, those memories, will always be part of the man you see here today.

In the ensuing years in which we have celebrated this day, there have been countless parades and countless speeches as we each try, in our own way, to remember and honor those whose service have kept this nation free and the greatest nation in the world.

While many of those speeches will be forgotten, as I expect my words here today will be, something that happened here earlier today will not be forgotten. Beginning at 8 a.m., the names of the more than 6,000 brave men and women who gave their lives for us in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan were read. Members of the university's chapter of the Student Veterans Association were joined by members of the campus community in that reading, and I was privileged to participate.

The reading was both a solemn remembrance of the sacrifice they made as well as being our collective way to say we will not forget them, that they will always remain in our memories and in our hearts. It was also a celebration of the lives behind the names. Even though we may not have known them personally, we do know them. They are the clerk at the local store in which we shop, the doctor who treats us when we're sick, the person up the street to whom you wave when you drive by. They are our family, our friends, our colleagues, our neighbors. They are, simply, us.

Service by individuals for the collective good is a hallmark of our nation and its history. From the citizen soldiers who fought in the revolution, to the citizen soldiers of today who leave their families, their jobs — their lives — to serve, they are the core of what makes the United States the UNITED States. *E pluribus Unum*: Out of many, one — are more than just words on our nation's seal. They are part of the principle that has, for hundreds of years, inspired men and women to volunteer to place themselves in harm's way for others and to stand before evil with a courage drawn from commitment and compassion.

During my military service I faced no combat, but I was privileged to serve with those who did. Every member of each military service knows that someday they, too, may be in combat and may be asked to put aside concern for their personal safety and instead serve a purpose greater than themselves. It is those individuals, past, present and future that we honor here today.

If you look inside your brochure you will see the names of members of the Shippensburg University family who died during their service to our nation. From World War I through Operation Enduring Freedom, Shippensburg has lost its own in the fight so we may be free.

And we owe so much to those individuals, and others who died and served, that no words can adequately reflect that debt. How do you say thank you to someone serving his or her third or fourth or more deployment in the Middle East? How do you say thank you to someone who suffered a wound, physical or emotional, that has irreparably changed their life forever? And how do you say thank you to the family and friends of those whose ultimate sacrifice on our behalf has left them with only memories of their loved one?

No words are adequate, but perhaps the respect and the love we have in our hearts for them can. It is the least we owe them. Thank you for this honor and thank you for all that you do for this wonderful country.