**Wreaths Across America State House Ceremony**

***Optional Script***

*Updated: January 18, 2023*

Welcome! Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate the mission to Remember the fallen, Honor those that serve and their families, and Teach the next generation the value of freedom.

We ask that to start the event, you all please join me in a moment of silence to remember the fallen, prisoners of war, and those missing in action and honor those who have served and are serving this great nation’s armed services.

**:30 seconds of silence recommended**

***OPTIONAL Color Guard:***

Please stand while we post the colors.

“Color Guard, post/present the Colors.” *(Where Honor Guards are present and participating, they too will come forward and place themselves on both sides of the memorial).*

**State House Coordinator to set this up in advance**.

*Note of clarity, posting vs. presenting the flags: If flags are put into stands, the command should be “post the colors,” if the color guard is to remain standing with the flags, they should be directed to “present the colors.” The emcee should direct the audience to stand while the flag is moving. When outside, you should either salute or place your hand over your heart when the American flag passes.*

***Opening Remarks:***

Thank you all for joining us here today. This year, across the country at State Houses nationwide, there are thousands of Americans gathering safely as one nation to Remember, Honor and Teach. We are all proud to be Americans that live in a free society made up of many people, from many walks of life. The freedoms we enjoy today have not come without a price. Lying here before us and in cemeteries throughout this nation are men and women who gave their lives so that we can live in freedom and without fear. We can worship as we see fit. We can raise our children to believe as we do. We are free to vote for the leaders of our choosing. And, we have the right to succeed, and we have the right to fail at whatever endeavor we wish to pursue.

The United States of America was founded on the ideals of Freedom, Justice, and Equality. Our Nation stands as a shining beacon of liberty and freedom to the world. We thank those who gave their lives to keep us free, and we shall not forget you. We shall remember. (Short Pause)

Today, more than ever, we reflect on our nation’s veterans and active duty service members who have had and continue to fight to protect the innocent and oppressed. This nation has always been the first to stand up for the freedom of people from around the world. Many of you here today have answered that call and served your country well. For this, we say, “Thank you,” and we are honored to know you.

There are many men and women serving today in all branches of the military, here at home and in places far away, that most of us have never heard of. These men and women are part of the best-trained, best-equipped force in the world. We honor them and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to keep our country safe from terrorism, hatred, and injustice.

Quoting our 40th United States President Ronald Reagan (short pause), “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, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States, where men were free.”

Today, we show a united front of gratitude and respect across the United States of America as we REMEMBER the Fallen, HONOR those who serve and their families, and TEACH the next generation the value of freedom.

***Wreath Laying: Color Guard and, if present, Honor Guard will present arms at the laying of the wreath.***

Now [Person’s Name] will lay a veteran’s wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States armed forces.

**Closing Remarks:**

The wreath before you represents our commitment as a United America to remember the fallen. We also want this wreath to symbolize our honor to those who have served and are serving in the armed forces of our great nation and to their families who endure sacrifices everyday on our behalf. To our children, we want you to understand the freedoms you enjoy today have not been free but have come with a cost that someday, you may have to pay yourself. As a nation standing together, we can defeat terrorism, hatred and injustice. Thanks to our Veterans, we have the freedom to do just that.

***This is where the scripted ceremony ends, and the Leader or other Designated person turns it over to the Veterans Groups.***

**Tips:**

Where there are high-ranking officials present (Governor, State Elected Officials, etc.) and who wish to make a statement (short) this is a good time to let them speak.

**Veterans’ Groups:** Coordinators, please make sure you accommodate all groups that want to participate in the ceremony after the scripted ceremony. Try to lead them to keep it short and to the point.

**Ending:** At the conclusion, where possible, have TAPS played. Retire the Colors and thank everyone for coming.

**Additional Ideas:** Before the beginning of the ceremony, some groups have the participants recite the Pledge of Allegiance and play the National Anthem. This is your choice to do, if desired.