‘

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

(Acknowledge any VIPs/special guests)

First and foremost, let’s begin today by recognizing all those among us who have been a part of the great brotherhood and sisterhood we call the U.S. military—our veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen, and reservists. Your service and sacrifice have kept our country safe and free. If you’re able, please stand to be recognized.

**<APPLAUSE>**

Over a century ago, DAV—then the Disabled American Veterans of the World War—was just starting its journey. Our founder, World War I veteran Judge Robert Marx, was beginning to shape our mission that would affect the lives of countless veterans and their families for generations to come.

He had witnessed how his fellow veterans fared after returning home from the war, many seriously disabled and unable to find work or access proper medical care. He saw how few resources existed to aid those who served so honorably in the nation’s defense, and he vowed to bring about change.

And, indeed, he did. Judge Marx began to advocate for the men and women who risked all for the sake of this country, particularly those who were injured or became ill in the course of doing so.

This year, as we mark Veterans Day and honor our nation’s veterans and their selfless courage, we should take the time to celebrate Judge Marx and the legacy he left behind. He and his fellow veterans’ foresight enabled us to do the work we do for veterans still today.

That includes veterans like Former Army Green Beret Michael McElhiney.

**<PAUSE>**

Mike was one of the first American troops in Afghanistan in 2001.

Unfortunately, he was gravely injured when a U.S. bomb was mistakenly dropped on his location, causing the loss of his right arm.

 **<PAUSE>**

He was one of the first post-9/11 casualties and has seen a lot since his life was forever changed in service.

He got his first taste of advocacy when meeting a soldier with a similar injury who did not have a specialized prosthesis like his. A new mission began for Mike when he started making calls so the young soldier could experience a higher quality of life with an appropriate prosthesis.

Mike has since been a faithful advocate for veterans and DAV in Minnesota. As chief of staff for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, he regularly testifies in the state legislature on behalf of ill and injured veterans.

Through his advocacy, Mike has increased funding for State Veterans Homes and connected DAV with supporters to fund critical programs that touch the lives of veterans throughout Minnesota and the nation.

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Mike is an inspiration to disabled veterans everywhere, myself included. He embodies never giving up in the face of adversity, instead of overcoming obstacles, embracing a new normal and inspiring those around him.

[Another example of an inspiring veteran can be found here locally. <Insert brief description/introduction of local veteran/DAV member to honor>]

For veterans like Mike, the consequences of war are a daily experience. Likewise, for you here today, Veterans Day is something you mark every day. We want everyone who served to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. That is a mission we live day in and day out as part of the veteran community.

We will not leave a brother or sister behind.

By joining organizations such as DAV and getting involved, we can connect with fellow veterans in a way unique to those of us who wore the uniform. There are ways all of us can support those who bear the physical, emotional and psychological scars of war. It’s important we get to know them and ensure they know we’ve got their six—especially during this time of social distancing and isolation.

Sometimes just sitting down to engage with veterans or their family member to talk can go a long way. Call. Email. Reach out online. No matter how, keep connecting.

Thank you for taking the time to remember our heroes. They never gave up on us, and we can’t give up on them.

God bless you all, bless our veterans and bless the United States of America.

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