

Sen. Marklein: A meaningful Memorial Day

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For many of us, Memorial Day signifies the beginning of summer. We start picnicking, tending our gardens, wrapping up the school year, pumping up our bike tires and making summer vacation plans to enjoy the weather. We set this benchmark for the day that, hopefully, night-time frosts are over and we can enjoy a new, warmer season. It's the unofficial start of summer!

But Memorial Day should also be a benchmark date when we take a moment to remember all of the lives lost and sacrificed for the sake of our freedom. This is why I encourage you to purposefully set aside time to make Memorial Day meaningful for you – and your family – this year. Veterans' organizations, auxiliary clubs, school bands and choirs, as well as municipal leaders from many of our communities have planned gatherings and ceremonies to pay tribute to the men and women who have died in service to our country.

I am planning to begin Memorial Day in New Lisbon for the dedication of the new Veterans Memorial at 11 a.m. Then, I will be heading to the Village of Kendall to speak at their Memorial Day Remembrance Service at 1 p.m. I am honored to be a part of these events this year. It is a true privilege to be invited to share my personal appreciation for the sacrifices made by so many throughout our nation's history.

By federal proclamation, the birthplace of Memorial Day is said to be Waterloo, NY where on May 5, 1866 a shop owner wanted a day when all businesses would close to honor the fallen soldiers who had lost their lives during the Civil War. The regular observance of Memorial Day caught on throughout our nation as we take time to

reflect and appreciate the sacrifices made to protect our freedom, secure our borders and strengthen our nation.

We Americans continue to collectively defend freedom generation after generation, all over the world. We defend freedom because we know that democracy is a fragile thing. President Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from its 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."

Memorial Day is the perfect day to remind every generation, young and old, about the price for our freedom. We must tell the stories of our veterans. We must show our respect. We must live as examples for future generations who will take our mantle of freedom and march forward.

They need to know where they come from. They need to know about the men and women who formed our nation and gave everything to give us the chance to be free. This is why it is so very important to make Memorial Day more than a day to grill brats and put in the pier at the cottage. We must make it meaningful.

On this Memorial Day, we do not have to focus on loss. We can focus on legacy. General Patton said, "It is foolish and wrong to spend so much time mourning the men who died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived at all."

Make Memorial Day meaningful this year as you celebrate the unofficial start of summer. It is up to us to preserve the memory of every man and woman who served and to make sure that future generations realize the important sacrifice that the fallen have made to preserve our way of life.