

# Chattanooga Times Free Press

## Pam's Points: In the spirit of Memorial Day

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*"Our flag does not fly because the wind moves it.*

*It flies with the last breath of each soldier who died protecting it."*

— *Unknown*

Today we honor more than 1.3 million American men and women who have died serving our country in various wars.

We say "honor" because we can't talk to them, feed them barbecue and cake, hug them.

It was George S. Patton who said, "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God such men lived."

These days, we observe Memorial Day on the last Monday of May every year. But historians tell us the original date was May 30, the day suggested in 1868 by Union Gen. John A. Logan when he called for a first official nationwide day for war-dead remembrance. He chose that date because it wasn't the anniversary of a particular battle.

One of the first Memorial Day celebrations occurred three years earlier on May 1, 1865, in Charleston, South Carolina, when newly freed slaves, members of the U.S. Colored Troops, and some locals organized a ceremony to bury Union troops who died in horrendous conditions at a prison that once was a racetrack. They honored the dead by singing hymns and placing flowers on their graves. An archway read "Martyrs of the Race Course."

In 1950, Congress passed a resolution to observe Memorial Day as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and in 1968 passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, placing Memorial Day on the last Monday in May to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. The day became an official federal holiday in 1971.

Last week, Forbes wrote, "Iran Appeals To UN For Help And Warns That U.S. 'Will Trigger War By Mistake'." President Donald Trump, who pulled the U.S. out of the Iran deal, warned Iran not to threaten U.S. or face its "end." Meanwhile we have an escalating spat with North Korea, a trade war with China, Trump is talking of pardons for war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we're still caging children on our border with Mexico.

But we cannot lose faith in America. As modern-day author and humorist Mary Roach says, "Heroism doesn't always happen in a burst of glory. Sometimes small triumphs and large hearts change the course of history."

Jennifer M. Granholm, former governor of Michigan, also puts it well. "Ceremonies are important. But our gratitude has to be more than visits to the troops and once-a-year Memorial Day ceremonies. We honor the dead best by treating the living well."

How about a war on corruption?

We recently noted that nearly 80% of voters have indicated in polls that they think spending on infrastructure should be a critically important priority. But we didn't point out that only 25% said building a wall along the border with Mexico was very important.

Last week, Bloomberg reported that Congress' appropriation last year of \$1.57 billion for Trump's wall has so far resulted in only 1.7 miles of fence. That's a billion-dollar-a-mile fence to nowhere that Mexico didn't pay for.

Trump wants the wall building contracts to go to his cronies and donors, writes the Washington Post.

"Trump has personally and repeatedly urged the head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to award a border wall contract to a North Dakota construction firm whose top executive is a GOP donor and frequent guest on Fox News, according to four administration officials."

The firm, Fisher Industries, is a company that sued the U.S. government last month after the Army Corps rejected its bid (it didn't meet requirements) to install the wall. But Trump keeps pushing Fisher, which already is building another section of fencing in Sunland Park, New Mexico, for a nonprofit group called We Build the Wall. That group guides efforts to build portions of the wall on private land with private funds. And guess what — the group's associates and advisory board include former White House adviser Stephen K. Bannon, Blackwater USA founder Erik Prince, ex-congressman Tom Tancredo and former Kansas secretary of state Kris Kobach.

Whither patriotism?

"Impeachment is a very divisive place to go in our country," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi keeps saying.

Gosh. That's a shocker. Stop the presses.

But Pelosi and all of Congress — Senate included — need to stop this lawless president's continued stomping all over the U.S. Constitution. That stomping is also very divisive, in case no one has noticed.

Someone who has noticed is Republican Rep. Justin Amash, of Michigan — the only Republican so far to publicly say, "President Trump has engaged in impeachable conduct."

Already, the House Freedom Caucus has condemned Amash, and a Michigan state representative vowed to give him a primary challenge. The president is calling him names. The only GOP officeholder with anything nice to say has been Utah Sen. Mitt Romney, who emphasized his disagreement, but praised Amash for "a courageous statement."

Cato Institute's Gene Healy then skewered Romney: "Coming from the on-again, off-again Trump critic, 'courageous' sounded a bit like a tell (subtext: 'I wish I had the guts!')."

Come on, Republicans. In the spirit of Memorial Day, take a hint from Mark Twain who said:  
"Patriotism is supporting your country all the time — and your government when it deserves it."