**Buontempo Speech [EZ Speech No..16297]**

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Remarks by Holmdale Mayor Greg Buontempo at the town’s Memorial Day observance.

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ladies and gentlemen . . . friends and neighbors . . . and fellow americans . . .

we are gathered here today to observe memorial day, 2017. and i say “observe” instead of “celebrate,” because — for me — this is not a day for celebration, but rather a day of remembrance, a day to honor and give thanks to the tens upon tens of thousands of american service men and women who, in lincoln’s words, “gave the last full measure of devotion” in order to preserve the american way of life.

you know, ladies and gentlemen, i’ve often heard it said that we americans take our liberty and our freedom for granted, as if they were our birthright. there’s a lot of truth to that, i think at least with respect to those of us who were born here, grew up here, raised our families here, and never in our entire *lives* knew a single hour, a single day, a single moment in our lives that we were not protected by the rights and freedoms our brave service men and women have for more than 200 years fought to preserve.

it’s also often been said that we don’t miss something ‘til we lose it. if you don’t believe this, ask anyone who wasn’t born here what it was like “back home.”

What was it like in iraq or iran or syria or lebanon or uganda or liberia or zimbabwe or north korea or any of the other places in world where freedom is unknown and democracy is only a rumor. ask these emigres why they left. ask them what it was like waking up in the morning with no newspaper on the front porch and no cNN on the television. Ask them what it was like to have absolutely *no* voice in how their lives were governed, how their kids were educated, or what jobs they could apply for. ask them what it was like living in a country where it was a capital crime to criticize the government or wear the wrong clothes or marry the wrong person or espouse the wrong religion. anyone who was born in the united states of america has never known this kind of deprivation, this kind of repression.

“no,” they’ll tell you, “the streets in america aren’t paved with gold. but they’re paved in liberty, and that’s infinitely more valuable than gold!”

“Yes,” they’ll tell you, “America has its flaws. it isn’t perfect, but it’s so much better than where we came from, it’s not even a contest!”

that’s why i’m not surprised that immigrants often have a deeper appreciation for america’s great achievement as a nation than many of us do who were born here and never knew the kinds of discrimination and injustice these escapees from despotism experienced in their home countries. a fish is not aware of the water he’s swimming in. likewise, i think there are too many ameri-cans who seem to be oblivious to the sea of freedom that sustains and nurtures us our whole life through. take a fish out of water, and you’ll witness, in micro-cosm, what living under despotism feels like — stiffling, smothering, and soul-crushing.

so i think it’s entire meet and proper that all of we americans — native-born and immigrant alike —take at least one day out of our busy american lives to remem-ber and pay homage to the men and women who gave their lives to ensure that america will always remain not only “the home of the brave,” but the “land of the free.”

with that, i’d just like to say thanks for listening . . . have a great memorial day . . . and god bless america!

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