

# TEN YEARS

As we gather here today it's hard to believe that it's been 10 years. Ten years since we were attacked out of a clear blue sky... Ten years since we watched those towers collapsing in New York, saw the Pentagon burning and watched the maps on TV to find out where that field was in Pennsylvania.

Ten years is a long time... but 9/11 seems like yesterday to some of us. For the last ten years we've been working at our jobs, raising our children, watching the news about fighting in remote places around the world, trying to understand the changes in America. Ten years is a long time... but almost everyone here today can remember where we were on that day ten years ago.

We are here on THIS day, in an America that is still free and strong, because of the commitment and sacrifices of many, many people. They all deserve our gratitude. But none deserve it more than the men and women who have served in our armed forces.

More than 6,000 of them have died fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tens of thousands more have been injured. The sacrifices they have made-- and are still making -- along with the sacrifices made for them by their friends and families -- are a reminder of something we must never forget: we live in the "land of the free" because we live in the "home of the brave."

More than a third of the Marines fighting in Afghanistan are between the ages of 18 and 21. Ten years ago they were eight, nine, ten, eleven years old. Ten years is a long time when you're a kid. Ten minutes can be forever when you're in combat. Ten seconds can be an eternity.

Fifty years ago -- half a century -- John Kennedy said, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

The price and the burden of responding to the events of 9/11 have fallen heaviest on our service men and women and their families. Their courage and commitment have carried us through. Ten years is a long time, but our support for them is timeless. Whether it's ten years or a hundred, we will not forget the sacrifices they have made... for all of us... and for each of us.

To the ones who are still in harm's way, we want you to know that we are with you... and we offer our prayers and our wishes for a safe return.

To the ones who have paid the price to defend our country, we offer our deepest, our most heart-felt, our most profound and enduring... thank you.