

MESSAGE FROM THE SC STATE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

On Sunday March 29, 2026, Larry Miller, South Carolina State Council President was the guest speaker for National Vietnam War Veterans Day ceremony at Cleveland Park Vietnam Memorial, Greenville SC. Below is the speech that Larry Miller delivered at the ceremony.

President Donald Trump signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 on March 29, 2017, to officially recognize as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The significance of this date being the last day Combat Troops were withdrawn from Vietnam on March 29, 1973.

The Vietnam War originally began as a civil war between the North Vietnam and South Vietnam Government. The North Vietnamese Army supported by communist allies and the South Vietnamese Army was supported by anti-communist allies. The US began providing Military Advisors and aid in the early 1950's, with US Combat involvement beginning on March 8, 1965, when 3,500 Marines landed in Da Nang, South Vietnam. When the US finally decided to pull out of Vietnam on May 7, 1975, approximately 2.7 million Military Personnel, of which 11,000 were Women, had served in Vietnam and with the total world-wide active-duty Military Personnel being 8.7 million, with a total of 265,000 being Women.

By the end of May 1975, 58,300 Military Service Members had lost their lives during the Vietnam War, of this number a total of (8) eight were Women Service Members. While 11,000 thousand Women served during the Vietnam War.

As of March 2026, approximately 1,573 Vietnam Veterans remain unaccounted for: 1,237 in Vietnam; 288 in Laos; and 48 in Cambodia.

As Vietnam Veterans began returning home from the Vietnam War, they returned to a Country deeply divided by the war, often facing indifference, isolation, scorn, and open hostility. Even Veteran Organizations like the American Legion and the VFW rejected Vietnam Veterans because older WWII and Korean War Veterans argued that Vietnam was not a "declared war," using this technicality to deny entry, and harboring resentment over the war's unpopularity, creating a hostile environment where Vietnam Vets were told they didn't belong, leading to deep divisions and slow Membership growth for the American Legion and VFW for years.

Though shaken and feeling rejected, a small group of Vietnam Veterans had decided to start their own Veteran Organization. In 1978 a group of activists came to Washington, DC searching for allies to support the creation of an advocacy organization devoted exclusively to the needs of the Vietnam Veteran. The VVA, initially known as the Council Vietnam Veterans was born. By the summer of 1979, the Council of Vietnam Veterans had transformed into the Vietnam Veterans of America with total assets of \$46,506. The Vietnam Veterans of America is the only National Vietnam Veterans Organization Congressionally Chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era Veterans and their Families, with current total assets of \$19,000,000. Currently with a Membership of 94,000 Vietnam Veterans of America is one of the leading advocates lobbying Congress representing not only Vietnam Veterans, but "ALL" Veterans, which has forced Washington and the VA Medical Hospital System to live up to the promises made by Our Government. The VVA's motto/slogan is "NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER" This is commitment to support Fellow Veterans

and ensuring they receive the respect and care upon returning home that many Vietnam Veterans were denied.

The Vietnam Veterans of America have over 600 Chapters spread out across all 50 States and territories of Guam, Puerto Rico, Philippines, and Virgin Islands. In South Carolina there are 10 VVA Chapters across the State led by a State Council as the States advocate representing “ALL” Veterans in the State.

The National Vietnam War Veterans Day is not about fanfare. Most Veterans will tell you that medals and monuments were never the point. What matters is recognition, genuine meaningful acknowledgment of what we have endured and what we gave. Not for Ourselves, but for the Brothers and Sisters we lost, and the Families who waited through long deployments and longer silences and endured post-war challenges. This day also helps build bridges. Observances like this one remind us that We Veterans are not distant figures. We are part of our communities.

If you are someone who is thankful for today’s Military, take a moment and thank a Vietnam Veteran. You will always be able to recognize a Vietnam Veteran, He or She is the one wearing the Military ball cap with US Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marine Corps written on the cap. We the Vietnam Veterans of America wear our Military caps not to impress you, but so we can recognize Our Brothers and Sisters in Arms and Welcome them Home and thank them for their Service. To all the Veterans present here today, and Our fallen Brothers and Sisters who did not come Home, I Salute You, Honor You, and am Proud to have served with you. I believe WE; THE VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ARE THE GREATEST GENERATION OF ALL TIME.

**Larry L. Miller
President
SC State Council**

