



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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**Suggested Speech
for the 250th Birthday
of the United States of America
2026**

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Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Legionnaires and Americans,

Earlier this year, the world witnessed an historic Olympic moment. It was a moment that could serve as a metaphor for the United States itself.

Team USA forward Jack Hughes was knocked to the ice and lost two teeth when he took a severe blow to the mouth from a hockey stick in the third period of the finals.

Less than 25 minutes later, he scored the golden goal in overtime to clinch the championship for the underdog Americans against the heavily favored Canadian team.

Just minutes after the victory, Hughes said, grinning through bleeding gums, quote – “We’re USA. We’re so proud to be Americans. Tonight was all for the country.” - unquote.

This year, America's two hundred fiftieth as an independent nation, is "*all for the country.*" The experiment in democracy has been a proven and exceptional success.

Yet creation of the United States almost didn't happen. The British military was the envy of the world in the 18th century. The Americans suffered significant losses in the battles of Long Island, Brandywine, Charleston, and Camden, just to name a few.

Nine of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence died while fighting in the American Revolution. A dozen signers had their homes looted or burned, five were taken prisoner by the British and 17 lost nearly everything that they owned.

During the signing, Benjamin Franklin reportedly said, "we must indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

Yet in the end, the upstart colonists prevailed. Because that is what Americans do. We unite for a righteous cause. And we *win*.

As we celebrate our great country, it is so important to recognize and remember our veterans. The National Commander of The American Legion, Dan K. Wiley said, “Educating future generations about our nation’s history is the most tangible method to keep the sacrifices and legacy of veterans alive. You simply cannot celebrate a great nation without celebrating its greatest heroes.”

Indeed, as President Lincoln memorialized the fallen at the Gettysburg battlefield, he recalled that they -quote- “gave their lives that *that* nation might live.” – unquote.

Thanks to their sacrifice, the nation *did* live. And it flourished. The promises offered by this fortress of freedom can be found in the Preamble of its Constitution.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Americans have long realized that the formation of a “more perfect union,” is an aspiration, not an accomplishment. Perfection is a goal for which we will perpetually strive, not a line item to be checked off a list.

While our founders believed “All men are created equal,” today we extend that desire for ALL Americans, men *and* women, of ALL races, religions and economic classes.

A nation that is a true melting pot also has the benefit of different viewpoints and visions. We recognize the humanity of one another. No single person has all the answers, but free and vigorous debate are the hallmarks of a democracy.

While celebrating our country's one-hundred-fiftieth birthday, President Calvin Coolidge said – quote – “We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. *These* did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created *them*.”-unquote.

He could just as easily have been describing life in 2026 as he was 1926.

We live in an age when astronauts travel to the dark side of the moon and enter the bright side of history. An age when technology creates artificial hearts and mechanical limbs. Same-day delivery has become a staple of American commerce and basic necessities are enhanced by smart phones and even *smarter* updates.

John Adams said -quote- “People and nations are forged in the fires of adversity.” Unquote.

If adversity is the barometer, the United States has a backbone of steel. After defeating the mighty British empire, America survived and thrived through world wars, a great depression, global pandemics, and horrific natural disasters.

The American Legion has long recognized that the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States was worthy of recognition that goes far beyond a single observance or holiday. A semi-quin-centennial deserves more than a semi-celebration.

Since July Fourth of last year, American Legion Family members and supporters have participated in what we call “The USA 250 Challenge.” Thousands of patriotic Americans have dedicated themselves to meeting personal goals of fitness, mental wellness, or community service all in support of our Veterans and Children Foundation.

Block parties have been held in American Legion communities throughout the country and the nation’s largest veterans organization enlisted as an official partner of the nonpartisan America250 Commission.

We do this not out of duty but out of gratitude. Much has been given and much has been paid.

As Jack Hughes reminds us, victory is not always a smooth or easy process. It took Thomas Edison thousands of unsuccessful attempts before he made a breakthrough in developing the incandescent light bulb. General Douglas MacArthur was forced to evacuate from the Philippines almost three years before leading a triumphant return of U.S. forces. Rosa Parks was jailed, but her arrest for refusing to obey segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama, inspired a national movement.

For two hundred fifty years, millions of ordinary Americans – some famous names that we know, but most of whom we don't – have exhibited the toughness and spirit that was spawned from a revolution that was expected to fail. As we have seen at Pearl Harbor and during the attacks of 9/11, we may get knocked down but never knocked out.

Americans do not need to be Olympians or even athletes to belong to Team USA. Just love the country, remember the price that was paid on our behalf and enjoy the freedom.

God Bless America and happy 250th birthday to the greatest nation the world has ever known.

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