



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

November 23, 2010

A THANKSGIVING DAY MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

This week, we will observe a Thanksgiving tradition that has its roots in our first days as a handful of colonies, bravely struggling for survival in the New World. From those earliest beginnings, Americans have often found reason to set aside special days for giving thanks to God for the many blessings bestowed on us in this abundant land. The Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Thanksgiving in 1777, beseeching the people to thank and praise God, "Particularly in that he hath been pleased, in so great a Measure, to prosper the Means used for the Support of our Troops, and to crown our Arms with most signal success."

Today's Thanksgiving Day observance dates from 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln set aside the fourth Thursday in November for giving thanks as a Nation. In the midst of a divisive Civil War, the country prayed for an end to bloodshed. With early and fragile indications that the tide was turning towards a Union victory, Lincoln's Thanksgiving Day proclamation declared, "No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God."

Thanksgiving 2010 finds our Nation once again at war. Let us keep faith with our forebears by once again giving thanks for the 23 million Veterans who have secured the blessings of liberty for so many around the world; for the nearly 3 million men and women who still bravely wear the uniforms of the United States of America; and for our 300,000 dedicated colleagues at the Department of Veterans Affairs, who labor daily to fulfill Lincoln's promise to care for those who have borne the battle and for their survivors. We owe them all so much.

Warmest Thanksgiving greetings to all our Veterans and their families, to the survivors of the fallen, and to everyone at the Department of Veterans Affairs working to serve them. May God continue to bless and protect our troops, and may God continue to bless this wonderful country of ours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric K. Shinseki".

Eric K. Shinseki