

# What did they fight and die for?



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We honor our veterans with parades, we remember those who give the ultimate sacrifice – and then, many of us don't bother to vote. So what did they fight and die for?

Let's start with our founding fathers, who, in the final sentence of the Declaration of Independence, stated, "We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Our own Richard Stockton, one of the six New Jersey signers of the Declaration, made this pledge and ended up nearly losing his life, did lose his fortune, and only managed to salvage his sacred honor. On a mission for the Continental Congress, of which he was a member, Stockton was captured by the British and put in irons as a prisoner. In British prison he was starved and mistreated, and his Princeton estate, Morven, was pillaged. He died at the age of 50. Morven was later used as the governor's mansion and is now a museum.

I'm not wishing the fate of Richard Stockton on anyone; all I am suggesting is that it will take less time on Election Day waiting in line to vote than it will take to buy a Megamillions lottery ticket at the convenience store. Then you can pledge your fortune.

Across more than 200 years, the United States has been involved in many wars. Here in AtlanticCounty alone, we currently have nearly 15,000 veterans with more coming as we wind down the wars in the Middle East.

Sometimes the goals of the wars were a little hazy, but what stood out in the fog of war was the clear-eyed determination of our soldiers and sailors to fight for the American way of life.

So if you don't vote as a part of what it fundamentally means to be an American, what did they fight and die for?

More than 1.3 million Americans have died in wars. They and the many millions more who served take this oath when they enlist: "I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

Our fighting men and women keep this oath. They believe in the Constitution and the right to vote it contains, which has been expanded through amendment. So when we rent a movie about war rather than taking a few minutes to vote, what did they fight and die for?

When the patriots of Flight 93 prevented a jet from crashing into the Capitol on that awful 9/11 day, what did they fight and die for?

When U.S. Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens volunteered for the most difficult and most dangerous diplomatic mission



