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Student Veterans Organizations Reception

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on December 5, 2016

Location: Chancellor's House

Remarks: Student Veterans Organizations Reception

Good evening and welcome. Dr. Chen and I are delighted to host you tonight. Thanks to Liz Costa and Kelly Moshier of the Chancellor's House staff for planning this evening; and campus catering for the great food and service.

I want to offer my gratitude for the selfless work done by John Miccio, president of the Student Veterans Organization, and by all the officers and members of this organization. Thanks also to Col. Ron Novack, the University's executive director of veteran and military affairs.

Establishing this campus as a welcoming and empowering destination for veterans is one of the fundamental pillars on which this University is built. The transition from military life to campus life can be difficult. Your work makes that transition much easier.

Your efforts have also made Syracuse University one of the best places in the nation for veterans. That the Military Times ranked Syracuse University the #1 private school and #3 overall in its Best for Vets 2017 rankings is a testament to your enormous contributions.

I'm not sure I have the words to express my appreciation.

As I speak to you, the University is observing a quiet anniversary. It was 70 years ago, this semester, that the first great wave of World War II veterans arrived on campus. Chancellor William Pearson Tolley saw it as a priority. He understood it was both the right thing to do and the wisest thing to do. He understood that these veterans, with their world view and leadership skills, would make the University a greater, richer place.

If you get the chance, I'd suggest stopping by "Our Doors Opened Wide: Syracuse University and the GI Bill," on the sixth floor of Bird Library. The Syracuse University Archives have assembled an exhibit that recalls the immediate difference made by that

returning wave of World War II vets. One of my favorite tales involves the crowd at football games. When these veterans arrived, traditional rules made it impossible for young men and young women to sit together, as students in the bleachers.

These veterans had seen combat. They had lived through the kind of trials many of you, at this table, fully understand. Many were already married. The idea that they could not sit with their own wives at a football game made no sense to them.

The policy, as you might expect, did not stand. It was changed, quickly and quietly.

That is a light example. It seems almost impossible to imagine today. But it makes a much larger point.

All of you arrived here with a world view, a perspective that strengthens Syracuse. You understand essential priorities of life about loyalty, responsibility, about decision-making under pressure. It is an honor to have you here, but it is also good fortune: You are a national resource, a national treasure. The universities that veterans choose to embrace will become world leaders because of your abilities.

Your organization plays a critical role in that process: You are the ones who help veterans settle in once they arrive. You make sure the experience is not as jarring as it could be, without support and friendship. You understand: Once veterans are here, once they embrace this experience, everyone wins. Everyone is stronger.

I want you to know how much that work is appreciated. Thank you for what you do. I am so glad you are part of Syracuse University.

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