

Representative Hurd's Memorial Day Address 2024

Greenwood, WI - Rep. Karen Hurd's Memorial Day Address, May 27, 2024

It was the summer of 1980, and I sat in a large classroom in Fort Huachuca with many other second lieutenants for our Officer Basic Training Course. It was hot, and the swamp coolers were not keeping up. The walls were painted a light green color which helped a little in the suggestion of coolness, but as I glanced at the young lieutenant next to me wiping sweat off his brow, I remember thinking that at least the classroom training was not as broiling as the field training. We were scheduled for another bout of that starting the next day.

The topic for the class that particular afternoon was Final Protective Fires and was being taught by a major that I had not seen before. I was prepared to listen to this teaching of military tactics again. I had already had this class in my ROTC education in college, but a refresher was always good.

“Class,” the quick sharp voice of the major tatted like the Morse code that we had recently learned, “if you hear nothing else I say today, hear this.”

I sat up a little straighter. No officer had begun a class like this before. I was interested in what the man was going to say.

“More soldiers have been killed and we have lost more battles because of this one simple mistake.”

The major paused to make sure he had the attention of the entire class before continuing. “The officer-in-charge failed to change his battle plan.”

The major didn't need to worry that he hadn't captured our attention. We were all ears. He then gave us the explanation that we were waiting for.

“If your back is against a wall and you are forced to call for final protective fires, NEVER dismiss the possibility that there may be other options.”

I need to let you know, that when a company commander—or any officer-in-charge is forced to call in final protective fires, it means that the unit is facing overwhelming forces and is about to be wiped off the face of the earth.

The purpose of final protective fires is to provide a last wall of protection that allows the maneuver commander to have a short space of time to readjust his plan—if it's not too late—before the entire unit goes down to the grave. It's a desperation measure.

The major continued, “Our most brilliant military geniuses have always been noted for their ability to come up with options that are outside the norm. On the other hand, the average officer, once he sees that his battle plan is not working, calls for final protective fires while giving the troops the rah-rah speech of

‘Come on, men, we can do it. A little longer, a little harder and we’ll beat the enemy back’ when all the while he knows that they are about to go to their deaths despite their efforts.”

“Never resign yourself to what you see as the inevitable. There is always more to see than what you think there is. Instead of fighting harder, fight smarter. Figure out a new plan that could possibly work to get your troops out of there.”

The major paused for a long moment as he looked at us with cold eyes that snapped and then said in a steely voice, “When your battle plan is failing, lieutenant, change your battle plan and final protective fires may never become necessary.”

Today, we are honoring those that have given their all serving our country. They had commanders or were commanders that were intent on carrying out the mission, changing the battle plan as necessary so that they might prevail.

Today we honor these men and women, because they DID prevail. Their battle plan WORKED—they changed it as many times as necessary until they won the battle.

How do we know that they won their battles? Because WE are here, breathing the free air of the United States of America.

Because of our service men and women, we are able to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. God bless these men and women, and God bless America.

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The 68th Assembly District includes portions of Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Clark Counties including the communities of Altoona, Fall Creek, Augusta, Fairchild, Greenwood, Owen, Withee, Thorp, Cadott, Boyd, Stanley, the Town of Lafayette, and parts of Eau Claire.

The 2025 69th Assembly District includes Clark County and portions of Marathon, Taylor, and Chippewa Counties including the communities of Abbotsford, Athens, Boyd, Colby, Curtiss, Dorchester, Granton, Greenwood, Loyal, Medford, Neillsville, Owen, Stanley, Stetsonville, Thorp, and Withee.