It’s an honor to join you tonight. General McChrystal, General Linnington, thank you for your service, in uniform and beyond. Ryan and Tom Manion, Amy Looney, and Heather Kelly, thank you for everything you do for our veterans, our gold star families, and our nation.

To all of the veterans, warriors, military families, and gold star families here tonight, thank you for your service, and sacrifice. You understand, better than anyone, the price of freedom. And you know, better than anyone, the character, the dedication, and the potential embodied in the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States military.

“If not me, then who?” Lieutenant Manion’s question echoes to this day, and not just from the battlefield. It echoes from the eyes of a kid looking for guidance. It echoes from a community ravaged by disaster struggling to rebuild. It echoes from the volunteer fire department down the street, the elementary school up the road, and the neighbor in need next door.

It’s a question that echoes the book of Isaiah, Chapter 6, Verse 8: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” The American people continue to ask the same question. And the American warrior continues to step forward with the answer. “Here am I. Send me.”

We know who answered the call to serve overseas. So it’s no surprise when those same men and women answer the call to serve at home. And it’s our responsibility to make sure they have the tools to succeed and thrive.

At the Department of the Navy, we’re committed to helping our separating or retiring Sailors and Marines achieve great things for their families and communities in civilian life.

Every departing service member attends the Transition GPS program. GPS stands for Goals, Plans, and Success. It’s not just about making smart career, education and money decisions, though those are critical. It’s about opening a path forward for continued service and success in whatever they choose to do.

And that doesn’t just benefit the warrior. It benefits the nation.

So I am profoundly grateful for all of the great work this foundation does to unite our communities and help our warriors and their families continue to serve.

They are the enduring strength of our people, and the continuing promise of the United States of America. Thank you.