Memorial Day is a time to bring family and friends together and welcome the beginning of summer. But as you're putting the final touches on the BBQ this weekend, we should remember that this holiday is a time for us to honor our fallen servicemen and women who made the ultimate sacrifice to our country. These folks made it possible for us to enjoy this holiday by giving their lives to protect the freedom and democracy we enjoy every day.

The first Memorial Day celebration was held in 1868 at Arlington National Cemetery. Then known as Decoration Day, this day was set aside to decorate the graves of those who had died in the Civil War.

As a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I recently visited Arlington National Cemetery to inspect ongoing projects to expand and improve our nation's most hallowed ground. I'm encouraged by the progress being made at our national cemeteries to rightfully honor these brave men and women, and I'll continue working to preserve the legacy and the contributions these soldiers made to our nation.

As you celebrate with friends and family this weekend, I hope we will keep in our hearts and minds the millions of servicemen and women, both fallen and still serving, who make this day – and our enduring freedom – possible.

Your friend,

John Barrow