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Americans often claim that there are basic American values, many can name what they consider to be essential, but there can be a dispute about exactly which qualities define being a true American hero. In many cases, the debate is between qualities such as success in a given field, discovery, leadership, freedom, and equality. However, there is one quality that is not in dispute whatsoever as it is essential to freedom and it is military/public service, without a doubt the most pertinent American value.

Military service has been given repeatedly throughout our history from founding to the current time period. Why would anyone want to do this with their life? What could they possibly achieve by joining in arms with their countrymen and what could possibly be worth it to them to be prepared to give their lives freely for? The answer is deceptively simple, to protect the lives, rights, liberties and values of each and every United States citizen. What goal then could possibly be more necessary and more prudent to achieve, for it encompasses all other values within its scope?

This value is most certainly one of the earliest of all as it is instilled in historically significant documents from the founding of our country. It is assumed in the Declaration of Independence, "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." The idea of splitting from England required military service to carry out and to protect once established. In the Constitution under Article II, the Executive Branch, the President of the United States is given the authority of commander in chief of the armed forces. The very idea of political service is etched into the Constitution through the many elected officials including Congress as well as the President himself. This value of military and public service to the founding fathers cannot be overstated; they even elected George Washington the first President.

Without a doubt there have been great Americans who exemplified the fundamental American quality of service from George Washington to Audie Murphy, they all deserve to be honored for their selfless choice, but perhaps none greater than Dwight D. Eisenhower. Not only was he one of the greatest generals in our hour of need, he was later able to translate his success into public service through politics.

Everything about Ike personifies this essential quality, from his early years through his old age and from his demeanor to his perseverance. After graduating from West Point 1915 he entered the tank corps and spent his time training those who were to be shipped to Europe in WWI. This exemplifies his ability to not only lead, but to be able to carry out a support role from home. After The Great War, when many of his countrymen put down their arms, he remained and quickly rose through the ranks. His leadership now was to be tested during WWII. In 1943 he was given the position of Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and later planned the invasion of Normandy and Sicily.

When elected in 1953 and in 1957 as President of the United States of America, Ike continued all the major New Deal programs such as Social Security, worked tirelessly on the Interstate Highway System, on Civil Rights, all common goals. He accomplished what he was elected to do, what more can you ask from a civil servant than that?

Perhaps the simplest way to participate in public service is by voting. I encourage all those of legal age to exercise this right. I also challenge those willing of the youth to join the military and defend our country, and for those gifted with leadership to seek public office. As a student I have not yet had the opportunity to carry out those types of service, but I have been able to serve my community through volunteering with my church and I encourage others to do the same. By choosing the selfless path of service we can improve and protect our communities, states and country and follow in the footsteps of an American hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower.