

Veterans Salute



Recent legislation gives Veterans the lifetime privilege to salute the flag. This privilege is also extended to all active duty service members while not in uniform. They may now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the National Anthem or during raising, lowering or passing the American flag.

"The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation's armed forces," said Dr. James B. Peake, secretary of Veterans Affairs. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag."

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the National Anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

An earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform service members during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense

Authorization Act of 2008, which President George W. Bush signed into law on Jan. 28, 2008.

When rendering the hand salute while in civilian attire, no reference protocol is made regarding the veteran or active duty member with regard to wearing of a cover. It further does not reference whether the veteran is inside a building or not.

The Marine Commandant position on these changes varies from the law.

A recent change to the law has authorized active duty and retired service members to salute the national colors, whether covered or uncovered, indoors or out. By custom and tradition, Marines do not render the hand salute when out of uniform or when uncovered. Let there be no confusion; that has not changed. During the playing of the National Anthem, or the raising, lowering, or passing of the national flag, Marines will continue to follow Naval traditions and the policy / procedures contained in Reference A. Specifically Marines not in uniform will face the flag, stand at attention and place the right hand over the heart. If covered, Marines not in uniform will remove their headgear with the right hand and place their right hand over their heart. When the flag is not present, Marines will act in the same manner while facing in the direction of the music. In cases such as indoor ceremonies when Marines are in uniform and uncovered, they will face the flag or the direction of the music when the flag is not present and stand at attention.

*James T Conway, General U.S. Marine Corps,
Commandant of the Marine Corps*

Veteran Service Organizations

Traditionally, members of many of the nation's veteran's service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the National Anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official headgear. Often the wearing of their official hat or headgear is equivalent to being in full dress uniform.

National Anthem Non-Veteran

All male citizens of all ages remove their hat, stand at attention, face the flag, and put their right hand over their heart. Female citizens of all ages should stand and face the flag, and put their right hand over their heart.

During the Pledge of Allegiance

Saluting during the Pledge of Allegiance is not altered. When not in uniform males of all ages should remove their headgear with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Females of all ages should place their hand over their heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag and render the military salute. Most Veteran Service Organizations usually follow the procedure to remove their headgear with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. This is mainly done so the member can recite the Pledge of Allegiance otherwise silence would be required if the salute was rendered.

Ron Griffin 2014
Town of Medfield Veteran Service Officer