A Cause Greater Than Self by John McCain Patriotism means more than holding your hand over your heart during the national anthem. It means more than walking into a voting booth every two or four years and pulling a lever. Patriotism is a love and a duty, a love of country expressed in good citizenship. Patriotism and the citizenship it requires should motivate the conduct of public officials, but it also thrives in the communal spaces where government is absent, anywhere Americans come together to govern their lives and their communities — in families, churches, synagogues, museums, symphonies, the Little League, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Salvation Army or the VFW. They are the habits and institutions that preserve democracy. They are the ways, small and large, we come together as one country, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all. They are the responsible exercise of freedom and are indispensable to the proper functioning of a democracy. Patriotism is countless acts of love, kindness and courage that have no witness or heraldry and are especially commendable because they are unrecorded. The patriot must not just accept, but in his or her own way protect the ideals that gave birth to our country: to stand against injustice and for the rights of all and not just one's own interests. The patriot honors the duties, the loyalties, the inspirations and the habits of mind that bind us together as Americans. We are the heirs and caretakers of freedom — a blessing preserved with the blood of heroes down through the ages. One cannot go to Arlington Cemetery and see name upon name, grave upon grave, row upon row, without being deeply moved by the sacrifice made by those young men and women. And those of us who live in this time, who are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice, must do our smaller and less dangerous part to protect what they gave everything to defend, lest we lose our own love of liberty. Love of country is another way of saying love of your fellow countrymen — a truth I learned a long time ago in a country very different from ours. Patriotism is another way of saying service to a cause greater than self-interest. If you find faults with our country, make it a better one. If you are disappointed with the mistakes of government, join its ranks and work to correct them. I hope more Americans would consider enlisting in our armed forces. I hope more would consider running for public office or working in federal, state and local governments. But there are many public causes where your service can make our country a stronger, better one than we inherited. The good citizen and patriot knows happiness is greater than comfort, more sublime than pleasure. The cynical and indifferent know not what they miss. For their mistake is an impediment not only to our progress as a civilization but to their happiness as individuals.