

On a hot summer day, surrounded by the endless white tombstones of the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale, the Mangano family said goodbye to Anthony. He was a son, a brother, a friend, who died for his country in Kandahar City, Afghanistan.

I stood under a pavilion, watching as the honor guard crisply folded the American flag; watching as Anthony's wife cried quietly; listening as his best friend eulogized him with all that needed to be said, "You're my hero, bro."

After the service, I returned to my office to meet with constituents about traffic congestion, gas prices, and jobs.

Today we feel consumed by the challenges in our everyday lives: the price of gas, a flat real estate market, the cost of living. These problems do need solutions. They need bold transformations but the death of a soldier and the wailing of taps puts them in perspective.

SPC Anthony Mangano's family understands sacrifice in a way many people don't. "He didn't have to go [to Afghanistan]," his sister said. "I didn't want him to go but he felt so strongly about defending his country."

What greater sacrifice? What deeper courage?

Thank you SPC Anthony Mangano.