

COMMEMORATION OF FLAG DAY

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, two hundred and twenty-four years ago today, the United States was engaged in its War for Independence. I note that the American Continental Army, now the United States Army, was established by the Continental Congress, just two years earlier on June 14, 1775. I express my congratulations to the United States Army on its 226th birthday.

At the start of that War, American colonists fought under a variety of local flags. The Continental Colors, or Grand Union Flag, was the unofficial national flag from 1775–1777. This flag had thirteen alternating red and white stripes, with the English flag in the upper left corner.

Following the publication of the Declaration of Independence, it was no longer appropriate to fly a banner containing the British flag. Accordingly, on June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress passed a resolution that “the Flag of the United States be 13 stripes alternate red and white, and the Union be 13 stars white and a blue field representing a new constellation.”

No record exists as to why the Continental Congress adopted the now-familiar red, white and blue. A later action by the Congress, convened under the Articles of Confederation, may provide an appropriate interpretation on the use of these colors. Five years after adopting the flag resolution, in 1782, a resolution regarding the Great Seal of the United States contained a statement on the meanings of the colors: red—for hardiness and courage; white—for purity and innocence; and blue for vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

The stripes, symbolic of the thirteen original colonies, were similar to the five red and four white stripes on the flag of the Sons of Liberty, an early colonial flag. The stars of the first national flag after 1777 were arranged in a variety of patterns. The most popular design placed the stars in alternating rows of three or two stars. Another flag placed twelve stars in a circle with the thirteenth star in the center. A now popular image of a flag of that day, although it was rarely used at the time, placed the thirteen stars in a circle.

As our country has grown, the Stars and Stripes have undergone necessary modifications. Alterations include the addition, then deletion, of stripes; and the addition and rearrangement of the field of stars.

While our Star-Spangled Banner has seen changes, the message it represents is constant. That message is one of patriotism and respect, wherever the flag is found flying. Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent 19th century clergyman and lecturer stated, “A thoughtful mind, when it sees a Nation’s flag, sees not the flag only, but the Nation itself; and whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag the

Government, the principles, the truths, and the history which belong to the nation that sets it forth.”

Old Glory represents the land, the people, the government and the ideals of the United States, no matter when or where it is displayed throughout the world—in land battle, the first such occurrence being August 16, 1777 at the Battle of Bennington; on a U.S. Navy ship, such as the *Ranger*, under the command of John Paul Jones in November 1777; or in Antarctica, in 1840, on the pilot boat *Flying Fish* of the Charles Wilkes expedition.

The flag has proudly represented our Republic beyond the Earth and into the heavens. The stirring images of Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin saluting the flag on the moon, on July 20, 1969 moved the Nation to new heights of patriotism and national pride.

Today we pause to commemorate our Nation’s most clear symbol—our flag. An early account of a day of celebration of the flag was reported by the Hartford Courant suggesting an observance was held throughout the State of Connecticut, in 1861. The origin of our modern Flag Day is often traced to the work of Bernard Cigrand, who in 1885 held his own observance of the flag’s birthday in his one-room schoolhouse in Waubeka, Wisconsin. This began his decades-long campaign for a day of national recognition of the Flag. His advocacy for this cause was reflected in numerous newspaper articles, books, magazines and lectures of the day. His celebrated pamphlet on “Laws and Customs Regulating the Use of the Flag of the United States” received wide distribution.

His petition to President Woodrow Wilson for a national observance was rewarded with a Presidential Proclamation designating June 14, 1916 as Flag Day. On a prior occasion President Wilson noted, “Things that the flag stands for were created by the experiences of a great people. Everything that it stands for was written by their lives. The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history. It represents the experiences made by men and women, the experiences of those who do and live under the flag.”

Flag Day was officially designated a National observance by a Joint Resolution approved by Congress and the President in 1949, and first celebrated the following year. This year, then, marks the 51st anniversary of a Congressionally designated Flag Day.

It is appropriate that we pause today, on this Flag Day, to render our respect and honor to the symbol of our Nation, and to review our commitment to the underlying principles it represents. Today, let us reflect on the deeds and sacrifices of those who have gone before and the legacy they left to us. Let us ponder our own endeavors and the inheritance we will leave to future generations.

Finally, as we commemorate the heritage our flag represents, may we as a Nation pledge not only our allegiance, but also our efforts to furthering the standards represented by its colors—courage, virtue, perseverance, and justice. Through these universal concepts, We the People can ensure better lives for ourselves and our children, for these are the characteristics of greatness. In doing so, we can move closer to the goal so well stated by Daniel Webster at the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument on June 17, 1825. On that occasion he said, “Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country. And, by the blessing of God, may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of Wisdom, of Peace, and of Liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration forever.”

I have long supported legislation which imposes penalties on anyone who knowingly mutilates, defaces, burns, tramples upon, or physically defiles any U.S. flag. I have also supported a constitutional amendment to grant Congress and the States the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag. I regret that the Senate has yet to adopt a Resolution for a flag protection Constitutional amendment.

I am pleased that the Senate adopted a Resolution to provide for a designated Senator to lead the Senate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States. This has added greatly to the opening of the Senate each day.

Today I encourage my colleagues and all Americans to take note of the history and meaning of this 14th day of June. We celebrate our Flag, observing its 224th birthday, and the 226-year-old Army which has so proudly and valiantly defended it and our great Nation.

MICHIGAN’S GUN LAWS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on New Years Day 2001, the Governor of Michigan signed into law a bill to take discretion away from local gun boards to issue concealed gun licenses and require authorities to issue concealed weapons licenses to any one 21 years or older without a criminal record, with limited exceptions. Under the law, the number of concealed handgun licenses in our State would grow by 200,000 to 300,000 a ten-fold increase. Needless to say, the law has the potential to increase gun violence in Michigan and endanger the lives of thousands of people. I strongly believe that this law is better suited to the old West than the new millennium.

I am pleased to report that hundreds of thousands of my fellow Michiganders agree with me. While the law was scheduled to take effect on July 1st of this year, a coalition of law enforcement and community groups from