

Message Points on Flag Protection

*Remarks of Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady
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It is always such a great pleasure for me to be with you and share the warmth of your presence. I am awed at the legacy you represent. Think of the humble beginnings on that St. Patrick's day so long ago. The dedication and struggle of those who went before.

Your legacy includes most of the Presidents in the last century, some of our greatest heroes, and most of the MOH guys I know. Giants of industry, diplomats, elected officials and many Members of Congress. Men like E. Roy Stone, James Wagoner, and the great leadership you have today. No matter how busy they were, they found time to be patriots.

And the women who have been with you every step of the way. We hear so much about the courage of men, mostly on the battlefield. But the women know the 3 o'clock in the morning courage, really the toughest kind. I am often reminded of the passion of Jesus and wonder where were the men. And your sons who are so generous in every way.

Your legacy encompasses monumental accomplishments. The GI Bill which enabled the greatest generation to build the greatest nation in history. Today the youth you developed continue the tradition of patriotism and represent all that is good in America at every level of service and leadership. But what you are doing for our Constitution through the flag Amendment may be your greatest legacy.

The enemy today is more formidable than any you faced on the battlefield. The debate in the House on the flag highlighted the great divide in our nation on the Constitution and the very definition of patriotism. Our opposition defines the essence of freedom as the toleration of unpatriotic conduct.

They actually separate our freedoms from patriotism and have their own version of patriotism. And they separate our laws from our values. They say the flag symbolizes the freedom to burn it; that our flag is the symbol of un-patriotic conduct. That burning the symbol of patriotism is patriotic.

They cower before the courts, they believe the courts not "WE THE PEOPLE" rule. And for good reason. Many of them know that their agenda could never survive in the bright lights of the public square, where the people rule. Their only hope is in the courtroom where the dark robed un-elected elite rule.

In the hostility of the media environment in which we all live, sound bites are the norm. It is true that if one can control the language, control of minds is not far behind. In a few seconds opinion is formed and laws are made. Tragically, many sound bits are false and misleading and we are led astray.

For this reason it is vital that we fill our quiver with truth bites as we go into battle with those who would disfigure America and teach our children flag desecration is speech. We must out communicate them. We cannot repeat too often these truths.

Never forget that the foundation of all we are doing for the flag is the Constitution. The Constitution is the foundation of all we are and the only guarantee of our future. It is under attack and little understood by too many of our people.

To those who say that burning the flag is speech, ask what is said when the flag is burned. Ask how you burn a flag with your tongue. Tommy Lasorda said that speech is when you talk. Our opponents believe they are wiser than 80% of the people, 70% of the Congress, 4 Chief Justices of the United States as well as Justices on 5 other Supreme Courts in the last century who agree with Tommy.

If they disagree with this mighty armada of flag defenders ask them if they also disagree with James Madison, who wrote the first amendment, and Thomas Jefferson who also agree with Tommy. Richard Gephardt, MO, was right in condemning those who seek to distort our Constitution while cloaking themselves in a disguise of free speech.

To those who say the flag is precious to them but the Constitution is more precious, ask if they have any possession that is precious to them, any one or anything that they love, that they would not protect. Pat Boone compared this to saying that he loved his mother but it was okay to bat her around.

If they say they do not want to amend the Constitution for the flag tell them that we are not amending the Constitution for the flag, we are doing it for the Constitution.

To those who worry about making felons of flag burners, tell them we oppose that. Tell them that flag burners are not the problem; the problem is those who distort our Constitution by calling flag burning speech.

To all who find virtue in bashing our values, who say we must tolerate conduct that the majority find offensive or evil, ask where that is written in the Constitution.

If anyone says this amendment damages the constitution, read the amendment to them and remind them that it damages nothing because it changes nothing; it simply restores the Constitution to its original meaning, the meaning of the founders.

If they say flag protection aligns us with dictatorships, ask them how a flag protected according to the will of a free people, a flag designed by the Father of our country, could be compared to a flag protected according to the will of a tyrant. Madison and Jefferson believed our flag should be protected, does that align them with Hitler and Stalin?

Ask them if they have ever heard of the prisoners of war of a dictatorship fashioning bits of cloth or toilet paper into a swastika or a hammer and sickle. Ask them if any POWs ever have ever said a pledge to the flag of a dictator. Tell them that Americans have done this for Old Glory in

every war.

If they say flag burning does not happen often, tell them once is to often.

Ask them what frequency has to do with what is right and wrong.

To those who say the Supreme Court is the final word, tell them that in our Constitution, the people are the final word. Ask them how the Supreme Court could rule that flag burning is speech, and allow it to be burned anywhere-but on their steps.

If they quote Colin Powell that the flag amendment is not worth it to hammer a few miscreants, tell them our goal is not to hammer miscreants, our goal is to hammer the Supreme Court, they are the miscreants in this case. Remind them that General Schwartzkopf said he considered the protection of our flag an absolute necessity, and a matter of critical importance to our nation.

Tell them that President Bush said he strongly supported the flag amendment because of, among other things, a debt to your legacy of sacrifice and service.

If they say they want to protect the flag but only by statute, tell them that the flag amendment will require a statute for protection, in fact it is the only way to get a statute.

Ask your representatives if they are for hate crime legislation. Then ask if burning the flag is a hate crime.

If they are confused with the difference between the Legion burning a worn out flag and some one burning or defecating on a new flag, explain the word desecrate to them. It is not a flag burning amendment it is a flag desecration amendment.

If they tell you we cannot legislate patriotism, tell them that patriotism is the last refuge of a free people and that every law we pass should inspire, should teach, should endorse, and should ensure patriotism in the people. Patriotism is simply love of country; our land, our neighbors, and our leaders. The first duty of every citizen is to be patriots and to make patriots of our children.

The notion that irresponsible, disrespectful conduct is necessary for freedom is not new but it is nonsense, not to be found anywhere in our Constitution. To separate freedom from patriotism is tragic. Patriots are the very source, often the fodder, of freedom. There is no freedom without patriots.

If they say the flag amendment reflects a tyranny of the majority, an effort to force their will on a more "virtuous" minority, ask them then if the minority of the Supreme Court, who wanted the flag protected, was more virtuous than the majority who said flag burning is speech. And ask them if the minority who would have elected their opponent, was more virtuous than the majority that elected them.

If they say we are trying to amend the Bill of Rights for the first time, ask if the Supreme Court had voted to protect the flag, would they then have amended the Bill of Rights.

If they were among those in the last election who said that every vote must count, or who during the impeachment process said we must listen to the people, remind them that is exactly what we are asking, listen to the people, let every voice count.

If they have trouble defining the American flag and feign concern about prosecuting those who burn bikinis embroidered with the flag or toilet paper marked with the flag, ask them if they would put toilet paper or a bikini on the flag of a veteran, or raise them from a flag pole during retreat.

If anyone says the flag represents the freedom to burn it, that our military died on the battlefields of the world so their flag could be burned on the street corners of America, warn them not to say that to a veteran.

Our struggle is made more difficult because it seems not to be measurable in material terms. To find champions with the moral courage to fight for a cause without material benefit can be difficult.

It frequently seems there are precious few who will do something simply because it is the right thing to do. Many shake their heads in disbelief that we would work so hard for something that promised no monetary benefit to any one, and has in fact cost much in time and treasure for those involved.

The truth is that all the prosperity and material wealth we enjoy is the result of the sacrifices of many who gave all they had simply because it was the right thing to do. Their sacrifices certainly were not materially measurable to them but have been immeasurable to America. Our children need to know this.

To ensure that the outrageous conduct of a minority does not outweigh the will of the majority goes counter to will of the elite, but it is the right thing to do.

To begin restoring the true meaning of the First Amendment, and remind the Courts that the people own the Constitution doesn't make us a dime, but it does help stop those who would remake our Constitution. And it is the right thing to do. To return to our children a protected priceless teaching aid for patriotism won't make us rich, but it will enrich their lives. And it is the right thing to do. To remind politicians that our laws should reflect our values has no price tag, but the results can be priceless. And it is the right thing to do. Our bottom line is not the dollar bill, it is the Bill of Rights, it is the right of the people to define the meaning of their Constitution, and that is the right thing to do.

For those who question our efforts, our question to them is - how do you stop doing what is right?

I recall with pride a conversation between a flag skeptic and an American Legion official. The skeptic expressed alarm over how much had been spent on the Flag Amendment and asked how much more we would spend. He was told we would spend whatever it took. Why? Simply

because it is the right thing to do.

Once again you are engaged in a great battle. Once again you are standing for what is right. Today you do not stand against tanks and rockets and missiles. Your wounds will not be mortal. But the wounds to America could be if your kind of patriotism dies. It is my great honor to stand with you.