

## Speaking With One Voice

A Flag Amendment, House Joint Resolution 54, was introduced in the House of Representatives on 13 February by Reps. Gerald Solomon (R-NY) and William Lipinski (D-IL). Soon, the same amendment will be introduced in the Senate. Now begins the battle.

The majority of the national media has already begun to hype the horrors that will result if this amendment is passed. The voice of the people will be drowned out in a barrage on the terrors of tinkering with the Constitution, suppressing free speech, amending the First Amendment and mutilating the Bill of Rights all mixed with the blessings that will accrue from the toleration of evil in our society.

Many good and faithful Americans who cherish free speech and are beguiled by the immutability of the Constitution will be influenced and intimidated by the media arguments. And so will their representatives, especially those who seek to curry favor with the media.

We need to thicken our fortifications (and our skins) for this volley of passionate and unreasonable discourse from the fourth estate. And we need to speak with one voice, resolute, reasonable and rational. As we begin our journey in the House, it may be helpful to review some truths on the flag debate.

**We are on the side of the Angels.** Most citizens want returned to them the right to protect their flag and 81% would vote for the flag amendment. Forty-nine states have petitioned the Congress for the amendment. No other issue in American politics today enjoys such support.

**The flag amendment itself does not change the Constitution.** All it does is take the care and control of the flag out of the courts and put it in the hands and hearts of the people who can then choose to do as they wish. Only those who fear the democratic process, those who get their way through the courts, would deny the people the say on this.

**Burning a flag is not speech, it is conduct.** You can't burn a flag with your tongue. It is an insult to the intelligence of the vast majority of common sense Americans to call flag burning speech. No amount of legalese will change that. If by the wildest stretch of reality, it was speech, it is hateful speech and should not be condoned any more than any other form of hateful speech. If the right to protect our flag is a threat to free speech, where is the evidence? For over 100 years the people enjoyed this right and free speech flourished.

It is those who have given the most for the freedoms we enjoy who, more than anyone, understand the price of freedom, and who most want returned to them the freedom to protect their flag.

**Amending the Constitution is goodness.** It is a blessing from the Founding Fathers to allow the people to correct their errors, and the errors of those who followed. George Washington taught us that the Constitution was an imperfect document, made more perfect by the amendment process. The people take their responsibilities in this regard very seriously. There have been over

10,000 attempts to amend the Constitution. The people have allowed it to happen only 27 times, and in every case the Constitution was improved just as Washington said. The First Amendment is a perfect example. A constitutional amendment is the only way the people can recapture their Constitution. The Courts have been amending the Constitution for many years, but it is only when the people become involved that there is an outcry.

**Our laws should reflect our values.** The very idea of law is value based. Some in this country glory in our tolerance for evil. And because of our reverence for freedom, we are a tolerant nation. But where in the Constitution does it say that we must tolerate acts which the majority of Americans see as evil? Where in the Constitution does it say that our toleration for evil is necessary for our freedom? Toleration for evil will fill our society with evil. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, in his dissent on legalized flag burning, said: "One of the high purposes of a democratic society is to legislate against conduct that is regarded as evil and profoundly offensive to the majority of the people -- whether it be murder, embezzlement, pollution, or flag burning." Even those opposed to a flag amendment profess to be offended by flag burning. Why tolerate it?

Speech is the persuading power that moves people to the ballot box, and motivates those elected to follow the will of the people. Flag burning is the persuading power of the mobs. One should not be allowed to substitute hateful, violent acts for rational, reasonable speech to be heard. That is the last resort of those who cannot properly articulate their cause but seek power at any price. It is terrorism.

Perhaps the most cynical argument against flag protection is the one that says it is a solution in search of a problem. **The scarcity of flag burning has nothing to do with the evil of flag burning.** People do not frequently threaten the President, or shout fire in a crowded theater, or burn crosses but we still should, and do, have laws against these evils.

**The real victims of flag burning are our children.** The greatest tragedy in flag mutilation is the disrespect it teaches our children, disrespect for the values it embodies, and disrespect to those who have sacrificed for those values. Disrespect is the genesis of hate, it provokes the dissolution of our unity, a unity which has only one symbol -- the flag.

In the final analysis, this issue is truly about free speech. The most precious speech of all -- the right of the people to speak and be heeded. That is all the flag amendment does. It lets the people debate and decide on their flag and what it means to them.

The people will not give up on this. Americans have always waved the red, white and blue when they saw evil; they did not wave a white flag. I hope you will reach out and touch as many as possible with these truths, especially your elected representatives and those unelected opponents in the media.