

SOUND OFF!



BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

#7

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

14 JUNE 2006

14 JUNE 2006 - FLAG DAY

Flag Day recognizes the June day in 1777 when the Continental Congress adopted the "Stars and Stripes" as the official flag of the United States. Flag Day was observed for the first time in 1877, the 100th anniversary of the adoption of our country's red-white-and-blue banner. Flag Day was officially *established* by the Proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson on 30 May 1916. While Flag Day was celebrated in various communities for years after Wilson's proclamation, it was not until August 3rd, 1949, that President Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14th of each year as National Flag Day.

Since 1777 the flag has represented the unity of the nation, as later formalized in the Constitution on 17 September 1787. The two wartime posters below epitomize this unity of a disparate people, united in the common cause of freedom. No single freedom is more important than the freedom of speech, for without that freedom, all other freedoms fail.



For the last 17 years there have been constant attempts to restrict freedom of speech in order to "protect and honor" the United States flag. In a June 1989, in *Texas v. Johnson*, the Supreme Court upheld the First Amendment right to burn the flag as symbolic political speech. Immediately thereafter, in June and July 1989, President G H W Bush announced his support for a Constitutional amendment to prohibit flag "desecration". There have been at least 6 subsequent attempts to amend the Constitution to restrict speech as it applies to the US flag; all have failed. Now they are doing it again.

We need to stand up for the Constitution, and we need to tell our representatives to do so also. If one person's speech can be abridged by law, all speech can be abridged regardless of the subject. All it will take in the future is just a simple vote to add some new subject to the list, like "Speaking ill of the President", or "Speaking in opposition to Congress", or "Disagreeing with national policy". Once you start it, Where does it stop?

As a veteran, those who burn the flag offend me, but they do not threaten me. If I value the first amendment, then I must respect their right to disagree in all forms. If I wish to be defended, I must defend.

In a 1999 letter, Colin Powell wrote "The First Amendment exists to insure that freedom of speech and expression applies not just to that with which we agree or disagree, but also that which we find outrageous. I would not amend that great shield of democracy to hammer a few miscreants. The flag will be flying proudly long after they have slunk away."

And Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-New York) said in Congress, "If a jerk burns a flag, America is not threatened. If a jerk burns a flag, democracy is not under siege. If a jerk burns a flag, freedom is not at risk and we are not threatened. My colleagues, we are offended; and to change our Constitution because someone offends us is, in itself, unconscionable."