

I give you the right not to love if that's what you choose. I'm never going to stand over you with a machine-gun in my hand and force you to care for me, even though it is your care that I need. You are free to love or not to love, to care or not to care, to respect or not to respect." If a country is that big in its heart that secure in its being that loving in its respect for its own people, what choice do you think the people are going to make, to love or not to love?

We have nothing to fear. Neither America nor the flag is in any danger, as long as the precious Bill of Rights, which gives both their meaning and their purpose, stays as it has for the past 200 years, unamended. Listen to the words included in the First Amendment one more time: "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech."

In 1990, when I was struggling with a previous flag amendment vote, I wrote this piece of prose which I called "Family Matters:"

Glenn?

Yes?

It's God.

Yes?

Still Struggling?

Yes.

What's the problem?

The problem is I'm nearly 45 years old, and I'm still filled with questions about purpose and meaning and who you are. Who are you anyway?

I'm love. Unconditional love.

Who am I?

You're the object of my love. I created you because I needed you. Love must have others upon which to lavish itself. It creates only that it may love more, and I love all of my creation.

What's my purpose for being then?

To learn to love unconditionally. To learn to love me and others in the same way I love you.

Why should I have to learn that? You're God. Why didn't you just create me in such a way that I loved you automatically?

Because love cannot be commanded. How can I be sure you really love me, or your neighbor, if you have no choice? I created you to be free, free to choose, because it is only in your freedom that you can truly learn to love.

But what if I choose not to love you?

That is the risk love takes. It is always the hope of love that the one upon whom love spends itself will freely choose to return that love. But in any case, it can never demand love be returned.

What will you do then if I choose not to love you?

I will continue to love you. I will wait. I will trust. Love never fails.

Glenn?

Yes?

It's Thomas.

Yes?

You walked over to my memorial last night.

Yes.

Why?

Because I'm struggling with a decision on a constitutional amendment to alter the Bill of Rights, and I need some help.

What's the problem?

Some people burned our flag and the country's upset. The President and several Members of Congress want to forbid the practice.

What do you want to do?

I don't know. I'm torn. I'm a history teacher. I've taught the Bill of Rights and the Constitution to hundreds of young people. I've emphasized the importance of those freedoms that you and others penned in that precious docu-

ment. I've told those children that these freedoms cannot be compromised. But now we have this issue with the flag. I love the flag. It symbolizes all those freedoms the Bill of Rights guarantees. Couldn't we pass just this one amendment?

Would you be willing to pass a second constitutional amendment forbidding the burning of the Bill of Rights?

No, that's not an issue. Nobody thinks about the Bill of Rights. We see the flag a hundred times a day. It's so visible.

You mean the symbol has become greater in the mind of the people than the substance behind the symbol? How did that happen? You were a teacher, not to mention a State Senator and now a Congressman.

Well, what do I do now?

Maybe you start teaching again, as a Congressman. And trust the people to understand. It's the only way to insure that you leave your children no less freedom than we left you.

Dad.

Yes.

I hate this place.

Why?

For lots of reasons. Your stupid rules that say I have to be in by midnight. You won't buy me a car. I'm sick of church every week and it's silly activities. There's a lot more. I \* \* \*

But we fell those things are best for you. It's only because we love you that \* \* \*

Well, I don't love you. Right now I don't love you at all. As soon as I'm eighteen I'm out of here.

Glenn?

Yes.

What do we do?

We remember the proverb, "Bring up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Yes.

We love. We wait. We trust.

Are you sure?

Well, I have decided—I am sure the American people love this country enough to be able to look past the surface nature of this debate and examine its real meaning. The American people, given the chance, will show they love this country, and there is no need to force them to do it by changing the very document that insures our freedom and invites that love.

And this is the truth. For over 200 years now the faith of our Founding Fathers has been justified because we are still the freest Bastion on the face of the Earth and every country in the world yearns for the freedoms in the Bill of Rights.

Every nation has a flag, but only America has a Bill of Rights. For over 200 years now neither the Supreme Court nor the Congress of this Nation has seen fit to change even one small letter in this precious Bill of Rights.

Yes, it is true we have gone through periods of time when rebellious children in disrespect for the great goodness of this country have shown their contempt. They march, they cry injustice, some burn the flag, some join the Communist Party.

In the 1950's, people demanded a constitutional amendment to forbid the Communist Party in this country. In the 1960's and 1970's there were flags burned all across America in the civil rights and Vietnam war protests, and people demanded then a constitutional amendment to protect the flag. Today there are more flags flying in America than ever before in our history. The Communist Party is

not even on the ballot in most States, and gets less than one-half of 1 percent in the States where it is on the ballot.

In the last several years, we have had a handful of people out of 260 million arrested for desecrating the flag. Some are demanding now another constitutional amendment to amend the Bill of Rights, to demand that we show respect by not allowing a form of disrespect. The Supreme Court said no, and Congress agreed. I was one of the Members of Congress that agreed.

I believe our forefathers would have said, leave them alone. If they are desecrating this flag out of meanness or ill will, rather than honest differences with their own Government, they will reap their own reward. They cannot destroy the Bill of Rights by destroying the symbol for the freedoms the Bill of Rights gives us. Their ideas will never match up to freedom, no matter what they are.

Leave them alone. The ignorance of their act will show the bankruptcy of their ideas. However, if you take away their free will, even to show disrespect, you will do more injustice to the principles upon which this government was formed than they ever could.

Just as we in our sins against the Creator end up bankrupt by our rebellion, they will end up the same way in their sins against the Nation. Have faith. Have faith that love and freedom will sin. Love never fails.

If we could command respect by the law, we would not need faith, but our forefathers said that faith will be the foundation of our freedoms, the faith that people, because they are free, will in the end choose to be responsible.

This is the history book from which I taught the principles of Government, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. This is my Bible, upon whose words I have stacked my life.

This Fourth of July, because I will do today what I think is consistent with my faith, Old Glory for me personally will fly higher and brighter than ever before. God bless America, God bless the Bill of Rights, and God bless our flag.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the Congress will vote today on a "Flag Burning Amendment" to the Constitution. This issue arouses great emotions even without any evidence flag burning is a problem. When was the last time we heard of a significant incident involving flag burning? It's a nonissue but Congress has managed to make it one while avoiding the serious matters of life, liberty, and property.

There just is no flag "desecration" crisis. Where are the demonstrators, where are the letters? Will this only lead to more discredit on Congress? Only 6 percent of the American people trust anything they hear from the Federal Government so why should they believe there is a flag crisis requiring an adjustment to the Bill of Rights for the first time in our history. Since most of what Congress does, leads to unintended consequences, why do we feel compelled to solve imaginary problems?

The American people are way ahead of the U.S. Congress and their distrust is a healthy sign the Republic will survive in spite of all our good deeds and noble gestures. And that's good.

What sense of insecurity requires such a public display to reassure ourselves we are patriots of the highest caliber, confident enough to take on the flag burning movement—a movement yet to raise its ugly head.

Our political saviors will have us believe that our loyalty to America hinges on this lone amendment to the Constitution.

As Congress makes plans to attack the flag enemies, it stubbornly refuses to consider seriously: the Doctrine of Enumerated Powers, property rights, political propaganda from a government run educational system, taxpayer's paid-for NEA sacrilege, licensing of all broadcast networks, or taxpayer's financing of monopolistic political parties, let alone the budget, the debt, the deficit, honest money, policing the world, and the entire welfare state.

Pervasive bureaucratic government is all around us and now we're spending time on developing the next addition to the Federal police force—the flag police. Diverting attention away from real problems toward a pseudo-problem is not a few technique of politicians.

#### MOTIVATION

Political grandstanding is probably the greatest motivation behind this movement to change the Constitution. It's thought to be easy to embarrass those who, on principle, believe and interpret the 1st Amendment differently. Those who vote eagerly for this amendment do it with good intentions as they laugh at the difficult position in which opponents find themselves.

Will the country actually be improved with this amendment? Will true patriotism thus thrive as the mal-contents are legislated into submission? Do we improve the character of angry people because we threaten them with a prison cell, better occupied by a rapist?

This whole process fails to address the anger that prompts such misguided behavior as flag burning. We have a government growing by leaps and bounds, our citizens are fearful of the future, and we respond by creating the underwear police—surely, flag underwear will be deemed a "desecration".

Why is dealing with a symptom of anger and frustration by suppressing free expression a moral good?

The best I can tell is legislative proposals like this come from Congress' basic assumption that it can legislate economic equality and mold personal behavior. The reasoning goes; if Congress thinks it can achieve these goals, why not legislate respect and patriotism even if it does undermine freedom of expression and property ownership?

#### DESECRATION

Desecration is defined as: "To divest of a sacred character or office, commit sacrilege or blasphemy or de-(con)secrate." If consecrate is "to make sacred; such as a church or bread and wine," how can we "de-consecrate" something not first "consecrated"? Who then consecrated the flag? When was it done? Sacred beliefs are those reserved for a religious or Godly nature, that is, to set apart for the worship of a deity. To make holy." Does this amendment mean we now concede the flag is a religious symbol? Will this amendment if passed essentially deify the State?

There are some, I'm sure, who would like to equate the State with God. The State's assumption of parental rights is already a deep concern to many Americans. Will this encourage more people to accept the State as our God? We imply by this amendment that the State is elevated to a religion—a dangerous notion and one the Founders feared. Calling flag burning "blasphemous" is something we should do with great caution.

Won't it be ironic if the flag is made sacred—consecrated—and we write laws against

its desecration at the same time we continue to steal taxpayer's money to fund the National Endowment for the Arts which truly desecrates Christ and all of Christianity in the name of "free speech"?

The flag, indeed, is a loved patriotic symbol of American pride and freedom. Many of us, I for 5 years, have served our country in the military fighting for the principles of liberty, but not for the physical cloth of which the flag is woven.

There is confusion between the popular symbol and the real stuff, and in the process of protecting our symbols we are about to undermine the real stuff—liberty. The whole notion of legislating against desecration is vague and undefinable. Burning can be easily identified but shouldn't it matter who paid for the flag? Are there no owners of the particular flag involved? Are all flags to be communal property? If we pretend flags are universally owned, that means we can use them randomly. If there is no individual ownership how can one sell or buy a flag? Should it not be a concern as to where the flag is burned and on whose property? With this legislation the flag will lose its identity as property and become a holy government symbol not to be desecrated? These are difficult questions but they must be answered.

Will using a flag as underwear or as a beach towel or a handkerchief or flying it upside down become a Federal crime?

The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars burn flags to dispose of them. This respectful ritual is distinguished from a hoodlum doing it only by the intent. Are we wise enough to define and legislate "intent" under all circumstances? Intent obviously implies an expression of a view. So Congress now feels compelled to police intentions, especially if seen as unpopular.

Whatever happened to the notion that freedom to express unpopular, even obnoxious views, including Marxist ideas was the purpose of guaranteeing freedom of expression. Of what value is protection of only popular and majority-approved opinions? That's a mockery of liberty. Soviet citizens had that much freedom. Remember, dissidents who burned the Soviet flag were shot. A national flag police can only exist in a totalitarian state. We should have none of it.

Why not police the burning of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation? These acts, expressing a radical fringe view, would be as equally repugnant, and a case could be made they might be even more threatening because their attack would be precise and aimed at the heart of American liberty. The answer is the political mileage is with the flag and tough luck to those who have principled opposition.

But no one should even squirm or weasel out of the right vote, even if threatened with possible negative political fallout.

#### FREE EXPRESSION VERSUS PROPERTY

The right of free expression and the right to our property are inseparable. A free society cannot have one without the other. When one is compromised, so is the other. Concentrating on free expression while ignoring the importance of owning property sanctions taxpayer's funding of the likes of the NEA and a Government propaganda machine like the one that permeates our schools from Head Start to the post graduate levels. By ignoring the taxpayers right to control all educational expenditures, property rights are violated.

When property rights are correctly honored, free expression is guaranteed through that right. The independence of a newspaper, radio station, or a church guarantees the use of that property in any free expression desired. Remember, no one has the right to use any newspaper, radio, or church to exert his or her own opinion as an example of "free speech." Catholics have no "right" to say Mass in a Jewish temple. Certainly in our homes we are protected from others imposing their "free speech" on us. It's the church property that guarantees freedom of religion. The networks or papers need not submit to demands to be heard by religious believers as an example of free speech. Use of the radio or newspaper by those with strong opinions or religious views is only done voluntarily with the permission of the owner.

Yes, it is very important who bought the flag and where it was when "desecrated." What if it's in a home or in a church for some weird reason? Do the police invade the premises? Who gets sent in: the BATF, the DEA, the FBI, the U.S. Army, or the flag police? If it's on Government property or a Government flag or someone else's flag, that is an attack on property and can be prosecuted. By legislating against how someone else's flag is being used, the right of free expression and property ownership is infringed just as if it were church property or a newspaper.

We work diligently to protect controversial expression in books, television, movies, and even bizarre religious activities through the concept of private property ownership, as long as violence is not used. Is this matter much different?

We live in an age where it's becoming more common to attack free expression and that's a danger we should not ignore. We find one political group attacking expression that violates the subjective rules of politically correctness while working to prohibit voluntary prayer. Now another wants to curtail expression through flag antidesecration laws in the name of patriotism. But there is a better way to handle demonstrators and malcontents.

The danger here is that flag burners frequently express a disdain for big Government. Curtailing any expression of criticism of the Government is fraught with great danger. Will anyone who opposes big Government someday be identified as a "friend" of the flag burners and treated like one since he is expressing an idea similar to the flag burners. Just because some people aren't smart enough to express themselves in any other way than flag burning, it does not justify the careless attack on freedom of expression. Once it's routinely accepted that expressing these ideas is dangerous to the status quo, all our freedoms are threatened.

#### SUMMARY

This is a dangerous and needless political exercise. Flag burning is not epidemic or even prevalent. Why must we continuously find dragons to slay? Whom are we trying to reassure? Why do we feel compelled to prove, by voting to change the Constitution, that we are true patriots? Could it be that Congress' lack of vigilance in defending the Constitution has created a sense of guilt that must be purged. But will it really compensate for the endless shredding of the Constitution through legislation that has occurred throughout this century?

If we could spend one-tenth of the time on restoring the Founder's intent in the Doctrine

of Enumerated Powers that we have spent suppressing free expression I would be a happy person. Instead, we daily shred the intent of constitutional law by regulations, taxes, and abusing liberty to a point that the Constitution has no relevance. Maybe that's it. If the Constitution has no current relevance, it's assumed to be OK to mess it up even more with an amendment which will serve only to further undermine liberty and threaten free expression.

What the Congress, the Executive, and the Courts have done in the past 50 years to undermine the Constitution is many times more disgraceful and dangerous than what any two-bit punk flag burner can do—especially if we ignore him. If this amendment is passed, flag burners will get more attention, not less. Their cheap message will get more publicity than if we had ignored them. The goal of the flag burner will be enhanced by the amendment by this extra attention they gain.

This amendment will do nothing to restore trust in the Federal Government. It won't fill the void left by the scandals, the perks, the plush pension program, the false promises of the welfare state, and pledges to balance future budgets. This amendment will do nothing to curtail Federal Government control over education, which indeed does infringe on free expression through Government indoctrination. Remember it was Government management of our schools in the name of free expression, which actually led to the prohibition of voluntary prayer.

We need to direct our patriotic zeal toward defending the Constitution and to the protection of liberty. Lack of this effort has led to the impending bankruptcy of the welfare/warfare state. Now there's a problem worth directing our energies.

The flag police are no substitute for our policing our own activities and responsibilities here in the Congress. We are endlessly delivering more power, in the name of political emergencies, budgetary crisis, and Government efficiency, to the Executive—a process not permitted under the Constitution.

We permit Socialists to attack property rights and the fundamentals of economic liberty as a right under the Constitution. But those who profess respect for private property should not be trapped into attacking flag "property" when it's used to express unpopular anti-Government views and even change the Bill of Rights to do so.

The Socialists know what they are doing but, the antidesecrators act out of confused emotions while responding to political pressures.

We should not further sacrifice freedom of expression with a flag amendment, especially when compared to the harm done with taxpayers funding of school propaganda and NEA desecration, it is negligible.

True patriots can surely match the wits of the jerks who burn flags, without undermining the first and fifth amendments. We can do better than rush to alter constitutionally protected free expression for a nonproblem.

We could easily organize bigger and grander demonstrations to celebrate our constitutional liberties for which the flag is our symbol in answer to the flag burners. I promise to appear, anytime and anywhere, to celebrate our liberties and countermand the flag burners who work so hard to offend us.

Mr. BROWN of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to House Joint Resolu-

tion 54, the constitutional amendment to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag. As I contemplated speaking on this issue today I thought about what I should say. I realized that the statement that I made on the floor back in 1990 is still relevant. As I said back in 1990, I take this time not because I expect to change the mind of a single one of my colleagues, nor contribute some profound insight or new knowledge to the debate. But I have very deep feelings on the matter, and I want my colleagues and my constituents to understand those feelings and to judge me by them, for they go to the heart of why I love my country and wish to serve it to the very best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, the first amendment speaks first of freedom of religion, then of speech, the press, and assembly. Religion is placed first, because many, if not most of the early American colonists who came to this country, came to escape the restrictions placed upon religious freedom by the kings of England who felt that they ruled by divine right.

No human rules over others by divine right. No flag symbolizing a ruler or a state is sacred. To even speak in such terms denies the primacy of God in the world, demeans the spiritual basis of freedom and democracy and smacks of idolatry. The very term "desecrate" means "to violate the sanctity of \* \* \*" and sanctity is "the quality or state of being holy or sacred."

No earthly flag is sacred or holy. All earthly rules and governments are flawed and imperfect, and must be brought closer to perfection by those willing to protest and to criticize, sometimes in shocking terms. Protection of that right is at the heart of the first amendment.

No single act of political protest is more frequent and disrespectful to the vast majority of American people than that of burning the American flag. I know that every member of this institution is personally and deeply offended by the thought of Old Glory burned in protest. However, we should be even more offended by proposals to fundamentally alter the very principles for which the American flag stands. Mr. Speaker, let us try not to move down that road.

The strength of this Nation has always rested upon the principles of freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly as embodied in the Bill of Rights. It was for these freedoms that our Founding Fathers created the greatest experiment in popular democracy in human history. The flag is the physical symbol of those freedoms and although it is not sacred, it pains us deeply to see that symbol destroyed by malcontents seeking by their shocking behavior to bring public attention to their unpopular political positions. In amending the Bill of Rights for the first time in our Nation's history, however, we would be doing more damage to the integrity of our society than could ever be inflicted by a small handful of disgruntled protesters seeking to call attention to their views.

The right to freedom of speech as established by the first amendment is not an absolute right. It can be restricted by the law and the courts when necessary to protect public's safety, or the rights of other individuals. But it stands at the apex of those principles and values which were aimed at protecting individual freedom from encroachment by powerful and autocratic organs of government. The first

amendment provides protection for those who express views that we believe, as well as those that we abhor.

In writing the Bill of Rights, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison captured the principle in the well-known words of the 18th century French author Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Those who wish now to amend the Constitution are saying: "I disapprove of what you are saying, and I intend to make it illegal to say it." This is what tyrannies do, not democracies.

There may be some who will argue that the Supreme Court erred in considering flag burning to fall within the protection of the first amendment by virtue of being a form of symbolic speech. I ask those persons to look within their minds and hearts and analyze the message they received as they watched the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square burn the Chinese flag and erect a miniature Statue of Liberty. Was the message that fun-loving Chinese students needed to keep warm and therefore burned anything available, and that they admired American statuary? No, the message was clear to all that they supported freedom and democracy and opposed the autocratic regime of the Chinese Communist leaders, and were willing to suffer to convey that message. And we applaud their heroism.

That Chinese Government understood the message full well and responded to their young people's demands for greater political freedom with tanks and guns. Right now, that country is considering a law prohibiting flag burning. Throughout history, dictatorships have sought to expand their power by prohibiting disrespect of their symbols. That was the case in 17th and 18th century England, and of course led many citizens to leave their country and settle in America in order to avoid prohibitions. In our country, it is not the symbols that are paramount to us. It is what those symbols represent that unifies us.

Love of country and respect for the values of human freedom cannot be coerced. A country which seeks to do so will not only fail, but its actions will destroy that which it seeks to protect. Some argue that the Bill of Rights can stand a little tinkering. Who are these people kidding? Don't they realize the risks that such a step would pose? In altering the first amendment, we would be heading down a slippery slope of further erosions of the freedoms that we hold so dear.

If flag burning were protected, then the next logical step would be banning desecration of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Statute of Liberty, and Declaration of Independence. And what about effigies of the President? The destruction of any of these—or any items resembling these important national symbols—is abhorrent and can be seen as a statement of profound disrespect for this Nation. But is that the path that we want to head down, given the courts the role of interpreting whether a flag printed on a matchbook, a replica of the Statue of Liberty, or a copy of the Bill of Rights were destroyed with the intent of making a statement against our Government?

Deep down, I believe that every Member of Congress recognizes the dangerous precedent we would be setting in tampering with the first amendment. We recognize these risks, but we are being pushed toward this decision by crass political opportunists who have already designed the 30-second television spots they

intend to use to advance their own political ends. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison would turn in their graves if they saw the work of their genius manipulated in this fashion.

The American flag is among the most powerful symbols in the entirety of human history. It has withstood the test of time not because it was protected against destruction, but because the ideas which it embodies cannot be destroyed—no matter what anyone does to the flag itself.

Mr. Speaker, the easy vote today would be to vote in favor of amending our Constitution. That is what our political pollsters tell us would garner the most votes from the American public. We were not elected to this institution, however, to take the easy road. Our task is a more serious and burdensome one. Each one of us has taken the oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” That document—and all that it stands for—is not threatened by a small handful of political protesters. It is threatened, however, by an effort to amend its most central tenet, the Bill of Rights.

As Justice Anthony Kennedy has argued:

The hard fact is that sometimes we must make decisions we do not like. We make them because they are right. \* \* \* It is poignant but fundamental that the flag protects those who hold it in contempt.

Nobody likes casting a vote that will be manipulated by high-paid political consultants as being a “vote against the flag.” It is preposterous, however, that we would modify the Constitution for fear of self-serving political attacks. In my view, there could hardly be a more patriotic act than to vote to protect the sanctity of the Bill of Rights. It is not the easy vote, but it is the right one.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the constitutional amendment allowing for legislation to protect the desecration of our flag. Throughout history, Americans have fought and died for this Old Glory, and we owe it to their memory to protect this symbol at home.

It will indeed be a challenge to at once protect the symbol and also protect that for which it stands. Whether flying over the local high school or the post office, beckoning foreigners at a U.S. Embassy or consulate, covering a crate of aid to victims of strife abroad, or drapping a casket of a servicemember killed in action, the Stars and Strips has and always will instill a sense of pride and security the world over. We have inherited this legacy, from the days Betsy Ross put together the patches of cloth, and we should treasure it, preserving it for the future, a future of much more diversity, patches of different-colored cloth.

So in voting for House Joint Resolution 54, I understand the feelings of free speech being restricted. I urge this body to take tremendous caution in drafting any future laws which will specify liability and penalties. In defending the symbol of the fort, we must not give away the fortress, the Bill of Rights. We must not today give up any power to vigorously defend and fully guard the liberties enshrined in the Bill of Rights in enforcing and adjudicating flag desecration laws.

We have a duty to those who have come and gone before us, and to those that preserve our country as a symbol of freedom the world over. Although desecration of Old Glory

is itself an expression of speech, I can, in good conscience, draw this thin red, white, and blue line.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Unfortunately, I was unavoidably detained and could not cast my vote in support of the flag desecration amendment. Had I been present, I would have voted for the amendment. As a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I continue to pledge my support to protect the veterans of our country, as well as the flag of the United States of America. The flag is the most esteemed emblem of this country—and this amendment will restore the authority to Congress to regulate the treatment of our most precious symbol.

To our Nation's veterans and their families, the flag is more than a symbol of our country. It is the cloth under which they defended our country and risked their lives. I truly believe that there should be a means by which we can show our love and respect for the flag—while at the same time monitoring the treatment of this highly important part of America.

Mr. KIM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Joint Resolution 54, an amendment of the U.S. Constitution to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag.

I grew up in Seoul, Korea. Not the Seoul we know today: modern and democratic. The Seoul I grew up in was an occupied city, invaded by Communist forces that had come down from the North and terrorized the Korean people. My family lost everything during the Communist occupation—including family members and friends, who we saw executed in the streets, right before our very own eyes. It was a living Hell.

I still remember like it was yesterday, the day the American soldiers, strong and brave, arrived in Seoul and drove the Communists out. Behind them—weathering the shrapnel and bullets—was Old Glory. To use, the Red, White, and Blue symbolized freedom and liberty.

In the midst of the battle zone that was my neighborhood, I stood watching the U.S. Marines fight in our streets and drive out the Communists. Suddenly, one of the soldiers broke ranks, picked me up and carried me out of the line of fire to safety. As he put me down, he patted me on the head and gave me two things: a chocolate bar and a small American flag. I kept that flag in my pocket, believing, as I do today, that it was a good luck charm, the symbolism of everything great about America.

That small flag gave me hope. It symbolized the courage and bravery of the young men putting their lives on the line, thousands of miles away from their homes and their families. That American spirit, that flag, made me want to become an American.

I owe a debt of gratitude to that flag, and to everything it represents. There is no greater symbol of freedom and hope anywhere in the world than the Red, White, and Blue. Ask any person in any opposed country, and they will tell you.

So today we again vote on a constitutional amendment to prohibit desecration of our flag. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. We cannot allow the symbol of our country, the symbol of freedom and liberty, to be dishonored and desecrated. If we do not defend our flag, who will?

Support our flag, vote for this bill.

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend Chairman Solomon and the

nearly 300 cosponsors, Republicans and Democrats, who recognize the importance of protecting the American flag. It is downright repulsive that the very symbol of our freedoms and rights can be trampled upon under the guise of the first amendment.

The flag is what soldiers salute every day, it is what we, as Members of Congress, address every morning when we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, it is what we hoist during military ceremonies, it is what we drape over the caskets of our fallen soldiers, and it is what we placed on the Moon in 1969 during one of the proudest moments of my life. To minimize the symbolism of what the flag represents is reprehensible. Congress should have the ability to protect the sanctity of the flag.

The Supreme Court has ruled that physical desecration of the flag is protected by the first amendment to the Constitution. This is a mistake and the reason why we are here today. Congress cannot pass statutory language prohibiting physical desecration of the flag because of this ruling. I join an overwhelming majority of my colleagues in protesting this decision and protecting our flag.

Our veterans, those who have fought to protect the freedoms we cherish, have asked that the flag that they fought for be protected. The Government should attach the same level of importance to the flag that we respect and treasure. This amendment is the right thing to do at the right time. Let's show our veterans that we respect the flag by approving this today.

I appreciate the opportunity to make my voice heard on this important issue and encourage my colleagues to support this measure and send this to the States for ratification.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I write today in support of House Joint Resolution 54, the constitutional amendment to prohibit the physical desecration of flag of the United States.

As a 26 year member of the New Mexico Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, I believe that our flag occupies a special place in our society, as well as in military protocol. Military members are expected to salute the flag of the United States when it passes by in parade, or during retreat ceremonies.

The flag is our unique symbol that signifies the beliefs on which this country was founded: liberty, freedom, and democracy. Although we have other important national symbols, none are treated with the reverence of our flag.

Although I am a proud cosponsor of House Joint Resolution 54, I was unable to vote today in support of this important constitutional amendment, due to the fact that I am currently back in New Mexico for medical reasons. I voted for a similar amendment in the 104th Congress, and would have done so again today, because I believe that the flag deserves special protection from desecration.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, as an original cosponsor of this resolution, I rise as a proud and strong supporter of this joint resolution which would amend the Constitution of the United States to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag. I want to thank Congressman SOLOMON, the other 284 cosponsors of the bill, and the alliance of groups and individuals for their tireless efforts in support of this bill.

As Flag Day approaches, it is appropriate that we take this opportunity to recognize and emphasize the importance of Old Glory. The flag represents something sacred. It may just