

District v. Schempp, 374 U.S. 203 (1963), in which compulsory school prayer was held unconstitutional, Justices Goldberg and Harlan, concurring in the decision, stated: ‘But untutored devotion to the concept of neutrality can lead to invocation or approval of results which partake not simply of that noninterference and noninvolvement with the religious which the Constitution commands, but of a brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular and a passive, or even active, hostility to the religious. Such results are not only not compelled by the Constitution, but, it seems to me, are prohibited by it. Neither government nor this Court can or should ignore the significance of the fact that a vast portion of our people believe in and worship God and that many of our legal, political, and personal values derive historically from religious teachings. Government must inevitably take cognizance of the existence of religion and, indeed, under certain circumstances the First Amendment may require that it do so.’

“(12) On March 5, 1984, in the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U.S. 668 (1984), in which a city government’s display of a nativity scene was held to be constitutional, Chief Justice Burger, writing for the Court, stated: ‘There is an unbroken history of official acknowledgment by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life from at least 1789 . . . [E]xamples of reference to our religious heritage are found in the statutorily prescribed national motto ‘In God We Trust’ (36 U.S.C. 186) [now 36 U.S.C. 302], which Congress and the President mandated for our currency, see (31 U.S.C. 5112(d)(1) (1982 ed.)), and in the language ‘One Nation under God’, as part of the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. That pledge is recited by many thousands of public school children—and adults—every year . . . Art galleries supported by public revenues display religious paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries, predominantly inspired by one religious faith. The National Gallery in Washington, maintained with Government support, for example, has long exhibited masterpieces with religious messages, notably the Last Supper, and paintings depicting the Birth of Christ, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, among many others with explicit Christian themes and messages. The very chamber in which oral arguments on this case were heard is decorated with a notable and permanent—not seasonal—symbol of religion: Moses with the Ten Commandments. Congress has long provided chapels in the Capitol for religious worship and meditation.’

“(13) On June 4, 1985, in the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in Wallace v. Jaffree, 472 U.S. 38 (1985), in which a mandatory moment of silence to be used for meditation or voluntary prayer was held unconstitutional, Justice O’Connor, concurring in the judgment and addressing the contention that the Court’s holding would render the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional because Congress amended it in 1954 to add the words ‘under God,’ stated ‘In my view, the words ‘under God’ in the Pledge, as codified at (36 U.S.C. 172) [now 4 U.S.C. 4], serve as an acknowledgment of religion with ‘the legitimate secular purposes of solemnizing public occasions, [and] expressing confidence in the future.’”

“(14) On November 20, 1992, the United States Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, in Sherman v. Community Consolidated School District 21, 980 F.2d 437 (7th Cir. 1992), held that a school district’s policy for voluntary recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance including the words ‘under God’ was constitutional.

“(15) The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals erroneously held, in Newdow v. U.S. Congress (9th Cir. June 26, 2002), that the Pledge of Allegiance’s use of the express religious reference ‘under God’ violates the First Amendment to the Constitution, and that, therefore, a school district’s policy and practice of teacher-led voluntary recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional.

“(16) The erroneous rationale of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Newdow would lead to the absurd result that the Constitution’s use of the express religious reference ‘Year of our Lord’ in Article VII violates the First Amendment to the Constitution, and that, therefore, a school district’s policy and practice of teacher-led voluntary recitations of the Constitution itself would be unconstitutional.”

REAFFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE

Pub. L. 107-293, §2(b), Nov. 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 2060, provided that: “In codifying this subsection [probably should be “section”, meaning section 2 of Pub. L. 107-293, which amended this section], the Office of the Law Revision Counsel shall show in the historical and statutory notes that the 107th Congress reaffirmed the exact language that has appeared in the Pledge for decades.”

§ 5. Display and use of flag by civilians; codification of rules and customs; definition

The following codification of existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America is established for the use of such civilians or civilian groups or organizations as may not be required to conform with regulations promulgated by one or more executive departments of the Government of the United States. The flag of the United States for the purpose of this chapter shall be defined according to sections 1 and 2 of this title and Executive Order 10834 issued pursuant thereto.

(Added Pub. L. 105-225, §2(a), Aug. 12, 1998, 112 Stat. 1494.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| Revised Section | Source (U.S. Code) | Source (Statutes at Large) |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 5 | 36:173. | June 22, 1942, ch. 435, §1, 56 Stat. 377; Dec. 22, 1942, ch. 806, §1, 56 Stat. 1074; July 7, 1976, Pub. L. 94-344, (1), 90 Stat. 810. |

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Executive Order 10834, referred to in text, is set out as a note under section 1 of this title.

FREEDOM TO DISPLAY THE AMERICAN FLAG

Pub. L. 109-243, July 24, 2006, 120 Stat. 572, provided that:

“SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

“This Act may be cited as the ‘Freedom to Display the American Flag Act of 2005’.

“SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

“For purposes of this Act—

“(1) the term ‘flag of the United States’ has the meaning given the term ‘flag, standard, colors, or ensign’ under section 3 of title 4, United States Code;

“(2) the terms ‘condominium association’ and ‘cooperative association’ have the meanings given such terms under section 604 of Public Law 96-399 (15 U.S.C. 3603);

“(3) the term ‘residential real estate management association’ has the meaning given such term under section 528 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 528); and

“(4) the term ‘member’—

“(A) as used with respect to a condominium association, means an owner of a condominium unit (as defined under section 604 of Public Law 96-399 (15 U.S.C. 3603)) within such association;

“(B) as used with respect to a cooperative association, means a cooperative unit owner (as defined

under section 604 of Public Law 96-399 (15 U.S.C. 3603)) within such association; and

“(C) as used with respect to a residential real estate management association, means an owner of a residential property within a subdivision, development, or similar area subject to any policy or restriction adopted by such association.

“SEC. 3. RIGHT TO DISPLAY THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES.

“A condominium association, cooperative association, or residential real estate management association may not adopt or enforce any policy, or enter into any agreement, that would restrict or prevent a member of the association from displaying the flag of the United States on residential property within the association with respect to which such member has a separate ownership interest or a right to exclusive possession or use.

“SEC. 4. LIMITATIONS.

“Nothing in this Act shall be considered to permit any display or use that is inconsistent with—

“(1) any provision of chapter 1 of title 4, United States Code, or any rule or custom pertaining to the proper display or use of the flag of the United States (as established pursuant to such chapter or any otherwise applicable provision of law); or

“(2) any reasonable restriction pertaining to the time, place, or manner of displaying the flag of the United States necessary to protect a substantial interest of the condominium association, cooperative association, or residential real estate management association.”

§ 6. Time and occasions for display

(a) It is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed 24 hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.

(b) The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

(c) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when an all weather flag is displayed.

(d) The flag should be displayed on all days, especially on New Year’s Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, third Monday in January; Lincoln’s Birthday, February 12; Washington’s Birthday, third Monday in February; National Vietnam War Veterans Day, March 29; Easter Sunday (variable); Mother’s Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Father’s Day, third Sunday in June; Independence Day, July 4; National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27; Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; Christmas Day, December 25; and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays.

(e) The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.

(f) The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.

(g) The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

(Added Pub. L. 105-225, §2(a), Aug. 12, 1998, 112 Stat. 1494; amended Pub. L. 106-80, §1, Oct. 25, 1999, 113 Stat. 1285; Pub. L. 110-239, §1, June 3, 2008, 122 Stat. 1559; Pub. L. 111-41, §2, July 27, 2009, 123 Stat. 1962; Pub. L. 115-15, §2, Mar. 28, 2017, 131 Stat. 79.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

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| 6 | 36:174. | June 22, 1942, ch. 435, §2, 56 Stat. 378; Dec. 22, 1942, ch. 806, §2, 56 Stat. 1074; July 7, 1976, Pub. L. 94-344, (2)-(5), 90 Stat. 810. |

In subsection (d), the words “Veterans Day” are substituted for “Armistice Day” because of the Act of June 1, 1954 (ch. 250, 68 Stat. 168).

AMENDMENTS

2017—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 115-15 inserted “National Vietnam War Veterans Day, March 29;” after “third Monday in February;”

2009—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 111-41 inserted “National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27;” after “July 4;”

2008—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 110-239 inserted “Father’s Day, third Sunday in June;” after “Flag Day, June 14;”

1999—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 106-80 inserted “Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, third Monday in January;” after “January 20;”

§ 7. Position and manner of display

The flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right; that is, the flag’s own right, or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

(a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff, or as provided in subsection (i) of this section.

(b) The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motorcar, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

(c) No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy. No person shall display the flag of the United Nations or any other national or international flag equal, above, or in a position of superior prominence or honor to, or in place of, the flag of the United States at any place within the United States or any Territory or possession thereof: *Provided*, That nothing in this section shall make unlawful the continuance of the practice heretofore followed of displaying the flag of the United Nations in a position of superior prominence or honor, and other national flags in positions of equal prominence or honor, with that of the flag of the United States at the headquarters of the United Nations.

(d) The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag’s own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.