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ELLSWORTH	MEADE	SEWARD
FINNEY	MITCHELL	SHERMAN
FORD	MORTON	SHERMAN
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GRAHAM	NORTON	STAFFORD
GRANT	OSBORNE	STANTON
GRAY	OTTAWA	STEVENS
GREELEY	PAWNEE	THOMAS
HAMILTON	PHILLIPS	TREGO
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BOB DOLE
1ST DISTRICT, KANSAS

243 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
AREA CODE 202
225-2715

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AGRICULTURE
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

DISTRICT OFFICE:
101 FEDERAL BUILDING
GREAT BEND, KANSAS 67530
AREA CODE 316
5W 2-5423

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BOB DOLE, 1ST DISTRICT, KANSAS, BEFORE THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, MAY 17, 1967

Legislation Needed to Prohibit Desecration of the Flag

Mr. Chairman, my purpose in introducing H. R. 9111 is to prevent further incidents involving desecration of the United States flag. An increasing number of such incidents have occurred recently where a small but vocal number of citizens, who enjoy the freedoms and privileges this nation offers, have shown utter disrespect and disregard for our flag.

Our flag is more than just an emblem. It is the symbol of the sovereignty of the United States and serves as a reminder to the entire world of the ideals for which our nation stands. The United States flag has long been the symbol of liberty, not only for our own citizens but also for many people in captive nations throughout the world.

Our national heritage recognizes the right of our citizens to hold whatever political views they choose and to expound these views by speaking, organizing, or writing whatever they wish. This right is one of the strengths of our nation, and it must be guarded. However, the Bill of Rights was never intended to provide a license for those who deliberately desecrate the American flag and thus show contempt for our national ideals. The right to disagree with governmental and individual policies and programs must be presumed, but to allow acts which desecrate the symbol of our nation is unthinkable.

Those who insist upon protesting our nation's policies in such a flagrant manner must realize they are damaging not only our national image but also undermining the very basis of our system of government which gives them the right to openly disagree and protest.

Since the early days of our nation, the flag has stood as a symbol worth fighting and dying for. Many brave Americans have given their lives in order to secure the continuance of the ideals and rights our flag represents. The flag, as our national emblem, belongs to all Americans. A small group of misguided malcontents should not be allowed to go unpunished for publicly disgracing our flag, while hiding under the right of dissent and while abusing and defiling the Constitutional rights of all Americans.

5-17-67

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Today when brave young Americans risk their lives in the battlefields of Southeast Asia, it is urgent that national unity and determination be stronger than ever.

In introducing this legislation, it was not my intent to curtail the right of our citizens to protest. It was, and is, my intent, however, to punish those who would desecrate a sacred symbol belonging to the nation as a whole. While every state in the nation has some type of law prohibiting desecration of the flag, the flag deserves uniform, national protection.

The House Republican Policy Committee has endorsed legislative action to prevent continuation of acts of disloyalty to our flag. I introduced a similar bill last year and feel it is even more important now that your Committee formally report my bill or a similar one. It will then be up to the entire Congress to decide what is the dividing line between lawful and unlawful expressions of dissent. My mail indicates widespread public opinion that something should be done immediately. Mr. Chairman, I urge the Committee to act favorably on my bill, H. R. 9111, or a similar measure to insure the flag to which we pledge our allegiance will continue to enjoy the reverence and respect it so fully deserves.

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