

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1989

CONTACT: WALT RIKER
(202) 224-5358

DOLE OUTRAGED BY FLAG DESECRATION AT CHICAGO "ART" SHOW --
CALLS FOR NEW LAW TO STOP IT

WASHINGTON -- I AM SUBMITTING AN AMENDMENT TO DEAL WITH THE OUTRAGEOUS TREATMENT OF OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG AT A SO-CALLED ART EXHIBIT IN CHICAGO. THERE HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATIONS AND CONDEMNATIONS BECAUSE OF THIS EXHIBIT. BUT THIS DISGRACEFUL DISPLAY NEEDS MUCH MORE THAN SYMBOLIC ACTION, AND TODAY I AM CALLING ON MY COLLEAGUES TO JOIN ME IN SENDING A LOUD AND CLEAR MESSAGE -- NEVER AGAIN!

AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS INSTITUTE OUR FLAG IS PINNED ON THE FLOOR DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF A LEDGER IN WHICH VISITORS ARE INVITED TO WRITE COMMENTS. OF COURSE, IF YOU SIGN THE LEDGER, YOUR FEET ARE SQUARELY ON OLD GLORY. NOW, I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT ART, BUT I KNOW DESECRATION WHEN I SEE IT.

TITLE 18 OF THE UNITED STATES CODE IS CLEAR ON THIS POINT. TRAMPLING THE UNITED STATES FLAG IS A "DESECRATION" SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL PENALTIES. IT SHOULD BE ENFORCED.

IN THIS INSTANCE, HOWEVER, THE EXISTING STATUTE MIGHT BE INTERPRETED TO APPLY TO THE PUBLIC AND NOT TO THE SO-CALLED "ARTIST" WHO HAS INVITED THIS TRAMPLING ON THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE AMENDMENT I AM OFFERING IS IDENTICAL TO A BILL INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE BY CONGRESSMAN SONNY MONTGOMERY AND WOULD SIMPLY EXPAND THE CURRENT STATUTE ON "DESECRATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES" TO INCLUDE "KNOWINGLY DISPLAYED . . . ON THE FLOOR OR GROUND . . .".

THE U.S. CODE ALSO CURRENTLY CONTAINS PROVISIONS REGARDING "RESPECT FOR FLAG." THIS SECTION STIPULATES THAT:

"THE FLAG SHOULD NEVER TOUCH ANYTHING BENEATH IT, SUCH AS GROUND, THE FLOOR, WATER, OR MERCHANDISE."

THE AMENDMENT DOES NOT MAKE A CRIMINAL VIOLATION OF SIMPLY HAVING ALLOWED A FLAG TO TOUCH THE GROUND. HOWEVER, ANY CALCULATED ACT OR SCHEME TO PUT OUR FLAG ON THE GROUND SHOULD BE A STRICT VIOLATION OF THE LAW.

THE DISPLAY AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO IS NOT AN APPROPRIATE USE OF THIS NATION'S SYMBOL OF FREEDOM -- OUR FLAG. QUITE FRANKLY, IT SHOWS DISRESPECT AND CONTEMPT FOR OUR FLAG, AND SHOULD BE EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED BY LAW.

-##-