

Standard proportions

Hoist (width) of flag 1.0	Fly (length) of flag 1.9	Hoist (width) of Union 0.5385 ($\frac{1}{18}$)	Fly (length) of Union 0.76	0.054	0.054	0.063	0.063	Diameter of star 0.0616	Width of stripe 0.0769 ($\frac{1}{13}$)
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	K	L

§ 2. Same; additional stars

On the admission of a new State into the Union one star shall be added to the union of the flag; and such addition shall take effect on the fourth day of July then next succeeding such admission.

(July 30, 1947, ch. 389, 61 Stat. 642.)

§ 3. Use of flag for advertising purposes; mutilation of flag

Any person who, within the District of Columbia, in any manner, for exhibition or display, shall place or cause to be placed any word, figure, mark, picture, design, drawing, or any advertisement of any nature upon any flag, standard, colors, or ensign of the United States of America; or shall expose or cause to be exposed to public view any such flag, standard, colors, or ensign upon which shall have been printed, painted, or otherwise placed, or to which shall be attached, appended, affixed, or annexed any word, figure, mark, picture, design, or drawing, or any advertisement of any nature; or who, within the District of Columbia, shall manufacture, sell, expose for sale, or to public view, or give away or have in possession for sale, or to be given away or for use for any purpose, any article or substance being an article of merchandise, or a receptacle for merchandise or article or thing for carrying or transporting merchandise, upon which shall have been printed, painted, attached, or otherwise placed a representation of any such flag, standard, colors, or ensign, to advertise, call attention to, decorate, mark, or distinguish the article or substance on which so placed shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine not exceeding \$100 or by imprisonment for not more than thirty days, or both, in the discretion of the court. The words “flag, standard, colors, or ensign”, as used herein, shall include any flag, standard, colors, ensign, or any picture or representation of either, or of any part or parts of either, made of any substance or represented on any substance, of any size evidently purporting to be either of said flag, standard, colors, or ensign of the United States of America or a picture or a representation of either, upon which shall be shown the colors, the stars and the stripes, in any number of either thereof, or of any part or parts of either, by which the average person seeing the same without deliberation may believe the same to represent the flag, colors, standard, or ensign of the United States of America.

(July 30, 1947, ch. 389, 61 Stat. 642; Pub. L. 90-381, § 3, July 5, 1968, 82 Stat. 291.)

AMENDMENTS

1968—Pub. L. 90-381 struck out “; or who, within the District of Columbia, shall publicly mutilate, deface, defile or defy, trample upon, or cast contempt, either by word or act, upon any such flag, standard, colors, or ensign,” after “substance on which so placed”.

§ 4. Pledge of allegiance to the flag; manner of delivery

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”, should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove any non-religious headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.

(Added Pub. L. 105-225, §2(a), Aug. 12, 1998, 112 Stat. 1494; amended Pub. L. 107-293, §2(a), Nov. 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 2060.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised Section	Source (U.S. Code)	Source (Statutes at Large)
4	36:172.	June 22, 1942, ch. 435, §7, 56 Stat. 380; Dec. 22, 1942, ch. 806, §7, 56 Stat. 1077; Dec. 28, 1945, ch. 607, 59 Stat. 668; June 14, 1954, ch. 297, 68 Stat. 249; July 7, 1976, Pub. L. 94-344, (19), 90 Stat. 813.

CODIFICATION

Amendment by Pub. L. 107-293 reaffirmed the exact language of the Pledge, see section 2(b) of Pub. L. 107-293, set out as a Reaffirmation of Language note below.

AMENDMENTS

2002—Pub. L. 107-293 reenacted section catchline without change and amended text generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, ‘I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’, should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.”

FINDINGS

Pub. L. 107-293, §1, Nov. 13, 2002, 116 Stat. 2057, provided that: “Congress finds the following:

“(1) On November 11, 1620, prior to embarking for the shores of America, the Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact that declared: ‘Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and the advancement of the Christian Faith and honor of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia.’.

“(2) On July 4, 1776, America’s Founding Fathers, after appealing to the ‘Laws of Nature, and of Nature’s God’ to justify their separation from Great Britain, then declared: ‘We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’.

“(3) In 1781, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and later the Nation’s third President, in his work titled ‘Notes on the State of Virginia’ wrote: ‘God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God. That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever.’

“(4) On May 14, 1787, George Washington, as President of the Constitutional Convention, rose to admonish and exhort the delegates and declared: ‘If to please the people we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair; the event is in the hand of God!’

“(5) On July 21, 1789, on the same day that it approved the Establishment Clause concerning religion, the First Congress of the United States also passed the Northwest Ordinance, providing for a territorial government for lands northwest of the Ohio River, which declared: ‘Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.’

“(6) On September 25, 1789, the First Congress unanimously approved a resolution calling on President George Washington to proclaim a National Day of Thanksgiving for the people of the United States by declaring, ‘a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a constitution of government for their safety and happiness.’

“(7) On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address on the site of the battle and declared: ‘It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.’

“(8) On April 28, 1952, in the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952), in which school children were allowed to be excused from public schools for religious observances and education, Justice William O. Douglas, in writing for the Court stated: ‘The First Amendment, however, does not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State. Rather, it studiously defines the manner, the specific ways, in which there shall be no concern or union or dependency one on the other. That is the common sense of the matter. Otherwise the State and religion would be aliens to each other—hostile, suspicious, and even unfriendly. Churches could not be required to pay even property taxes. Municipalities would not be permitted to render police or fire protection to religious groups. Policemen who helped parishioners into their places of worship would violate the Constitution. Prayers in our legislative halls; the appeals to the Almighty in the messages of the Chief Executive; the proclamations making Thanksgiving Day a holiday; “so help me God” in our courtroom oaths—these and all other references to the Almighty that run through our laws, our public rituals, our ceremonies would be flouting the First Amendment. A fastidious atheist or agnostic could even object to the supplication with which the Court opens each session: “God save the United States and this Honorable Court.”’

“(9) On June 15, 1954, Congress passed and President Eisenhower signed into law a statute that was clearly

consistent with the text and intent of the Constitution of the United States, that amended the Pledge of Allegiance to read: ‘I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’

“(10) On July 20, 1956, Congress proclaimed that the national motto of the United States is ‘In God We Trust’, and that motto is inscribed above the main door of the Senate, behind the Chair of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and on the currency of the United States.

“(11) On June 17, 1963, in the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Abington School 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

Table with 3 columns: Revised Section, Source (U.S. Code), Source (Statutes at Large). Row 5: Revised Section 5, Source 36:173, Source 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.

§ 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; 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; Independence Day, July 4; 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.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Table with 3 columns: Revised Section, Source (U.S. Code), Source (Statutes at Large). Row 6: Revised Section 6, Source 36:174, Source 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

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